
ON THE SHELF:
WOMEN WRITERS, PUBLISHING AND PHILANTHROPY
IN MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

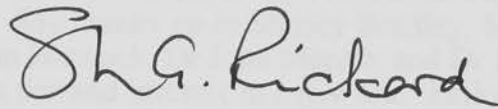
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of the Australian National University**

DECLARATION

Except where indicated, this thesis
is my own work.



SUZANNE L.G. RICKARD

November, 1995.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the private and public worlds of three mid-nineteenth century women, Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton, and Charlotte Maria Tucker. All enjoyed remarkable success writing evangelical fiction and performing philanthropic works. Between 1850 and 1890, their careers in both fields flourished and all gained some celebrity. Now they are unfamiliar: their books, once so popular, remain unread, and their philanthropic and social work is unremembered.

Through their lives and writings, this study analyses contemporary Victorian attitudes towards single women, female writers, and the concept of “usefulness”. I also examine the religious beliefs and secular concerns which inspired these women to undertake practical philanthropic work, and chart the nearly forgotten literary genre of female evangelical fiction built on social investigations intended to provide readers and publishers with “fiction founded on fact”.

Amidst the diversity of Victorian feminist campaigns, the reforming activities of philanthropic and literary women have often been relegated to the background. This study attempts to redress the balance and to rescue an arena of significant feminine activity. Skene, Stretton and Tucker used fiction and philanthropy as a way of participating in public life and influencing public conscience. Through the act of writing they contributed to public discourse and raised matters of urgent social, moral and legislative concern. By working actively in different fields of philanthropic endeavour, these women gained expertise which provided them with an acknowledged and respected status.

Analysis of their personal letters and diaries, published works, and publishers’ records, reveals evidence of a symbiotic relationship between philanthropic writers, evangelically-inclined publishers and a receptive Victorian readership. This relationship involved negotiation between individual women and publishers, and tested the competing interests of Victorian entrepreneurial practice and the ethics of Christian philanthropy.

Status, age, gender, religious faith, independence and family relationships are recurring themes, building up a picture of three redoubtable women who worked consciously to create distinctive *personas* through their pseudonyms. While articulating their own philanthropic interests, each took singular responsibility for their personal, spiritual and economic needs. This study concludes that women’s works of philanthropy and works of evangelical fiction provide dynamic cultural sites for further historical inquiry.

Introduction

The journalist and critic, G.H. Lewes, writing in 1847 in *Fraser's Magazine* of his fears of a literary invasion by women writers, described a distinct generation of rising female authors as 'idle women'. Professional male authors were in danger of being swamped by an 'innumerable host of hungry pretenders ... like the army of Xerxes, swelled and encumbered by women, children and ill-trained troops'.¹

Arguing in favour of periodical authorship and the universal aims of literature, Lewes wrote grandly of vocation and professionalism, yet contended that the 'teachers of the people should be *men* of an unmistakeable vocation.'² As a writer and critic, Lewes was anxious to preserve an exclusive professional literary domain and to cordon off territory for authentic male "authors". This left little space in his literary world for aspiring female "authoresses", especially those with literary *and* evangelical vocations. While others conceded the extraordinary advances that female authorship had already made, Lewes deliberately set aside women's literary works.³ He neglected to describe the prodigious output of semi-religious fiction of these allegedly 'idle' women and he completely ignored the genre's popularity with the reading public, concluding brutally that '[W]riters of [these] books exhibit every shade of dulness and imbecility'.⁴

The major subjects of this thesis, Felicia Skene (1821-1899), Hesba Stretton (1832-1911) and Charlotte Maria Tucker (1821-1893), whose literary debuts and successes were made within a few years of this diatribe, would no doubt have been seen by Lewes as Christian 'dunces'. Certainly, some called their books prosaic and others found their fictional heroes and heroines too self-sacrificing. Yet such critics were confounded by readers—men, women and children of all conditions and classes—who found these works of semi-religious fiction variously shocking, comforting, visionary and inspiring. Impressive sales figures and heartfelt testimonies attest to this fact. Above all, these three writers, seen here as individuals rather than as an undistinguished group of female literary hacks, were neither dull, "ill-trained", nor imbecilic.

¹ Unsigned article [G.H. Lewes], 'The Condition of Authors in England, Germany and France', *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. 325, March 1847, p. 285.

² *Ibid.*, [Emphasis added].

³ It was many years before Lewes praised Jane Austen's novels in *Blackwood's Magazine*, (July 1859), and gave estimable advice to women writers in his article, 'The Lady Novelists' in the *National Review*, Vol. VIII, Jan. 1859.

⁴ [Lewes], *Fraser's Magazine*, *loc. cit.*, p. 290 (spelling is retained in its original form).

In a crowded mid-nineteenth-century publishing world peopled with writers of unexampled popularity and distinction, Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton, and Charlotte Maria Tucker managed to re-fashion and extend an existing literary genre to answer an eager demand for a secularised and fictionalised form of religious writing. Despite the contemporary distinction of Charles Dickens, W.M. Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, George Eliot, Charles Kingsley, Charlotte Brontë, and Elizabeth Gaskell, these three women were not overshadowed in their own day. On the contrary, they created and filled an important alternative literary niche and frequently matched or outsold the masters of literature as well as other competitors in the field.

In important respects, the genre of semi-religious fiction mirrored the school of social realism perfected by mid-Victorian artists. Skene's, Stretton's and Tucker's writings were routinely accompanied by the works of illustrators of the calibre of the Dalzeils, the Whympers and Lawson, who provided graphic and compelling imagery to accompany their poignant narratives.⁵ In juvenile works and serialised fiction, Hesba Stretton tapped the emotional power of the idealised waif and street arab — an icon and metaphor for social distress in Victorian art and in literature. Family figures depicted by the Dalzeils in Charlotte Tucker's fiction worked simultaneously to comfort and furnish readers with an idealized social model. With and without illustrations, Skene's, Stretton's and Tucker's works peaked in popularity when their themes ran closest to the concerns of the day. Though willing to modernize themes and characters for "contemporary" social relevance, their underlying intent was always clear. Like their genre, these writers remained unashamedly didactic.

Semi-religious fiction from mid-century and beyond included more than moral fables, religious tales, or fictional "good works", yet it is difficult to define the genre precisely. Historians have described it variously as 'applied' literature, religious propaganda or as Evangelical fiction, but if labels differ, most agree on the genre's mid-century impact. Margaret Maison has likened semi-religious fiction to bolts of lightning which 'fired the imagination of countless Victorians'.⁶ Readership cut across class, generation, gender, religion, occupation and culture — patrician philanthropists and plebeian merchant seamen were amongst those captivated. Many individuals recorded that the genre's blend of fact with fiction

5 For a full discussion of the works of these and other important illustrators and engravers, see Simon Houfe, *The Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists, 1800-1914*, Antique Collectors' Club, U.K., 1978.

6 Margaret M. Maison, *Search Your Soul, Eustace: A Survey of the Religious Novel in the Victorian Age*, Sheed & Ward, London, 1961, p. 3.

had exercised a formative influence upon their thinking both as children and as adults, a legacy which is considered in my conclusion.

I argue here that this fictional genre has been largely ignored or denigrated by many twentieth-century critics who have missed or misunderstood the writers' original purposes. John Sutherland had made a similar point in relation to much Victorian fiction and has argued that not all, now-neglected, Victorian novels are worthless: 'below the *corps d'élite* there is a quantity of first rate and consistently worthwhile achievement which has been let go into oblivion'.⁷ Works of semi-religious or evangelical fiction which fall or are pushed into this category have been branded as overly-didactic, sentimental and mawkish but, as Jane Tomkins has argued in an American context, these works were written 'not so that they could be enshrined in any literary hall of fame, but in order to win the belief and influence the behaviour of the widest possible audience'.⁸ This kind of semi-religious fiction was *indeed* deliberately sentimental. It was written in order to appeal to Victorian sensibilities and constructed as an emotive instrument with the potential to influence thought and induce moral action.

This distinctive literary form, which crossed the spectrum of Protestant religious denominations, was regarded by writers, publishers and readers as a crucial medium for spreading the Gospel and religious principle. Though not necessarily cast as tract, parable, nor allegory, it often combined elements of all three. Writers from the High and Low, Broad, and Dissenting religious traditions, as well as a few notable Roman Catholic writers, all successfully contributed to the genre.⁹ Evangelical intentions and staunchly Christian standpoints endowed the genre with a universality which in a literary, if not a strictly theological sense made it almost ecumenical. Theologians, with a few exceptions, (the Reverend Charles Kingsley was one), generally chose to distance themselves from fiction, preferring to write essays and sermons.

Although active in some number, men were never as successful in this field as the devout women from the laity who excelled in weaving theology and current religious practice into their works. Regardless of gender, writers employed biblical idioms and tropes, especially those of sacrifice, suffering, and salvation, to

⁷ John Sutherland, Preface, *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction*, Longman, London, 1988, pp. 1-2.

⁸ Jane Tomkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1985, p. xi.

⁹ Three notable Roman Catholic converts, John Henry Newman, Lady Georgiana Fullerton, and Elizabeth Furlong Shipton Harris also used this genre with outstanding success.

underpin fictional narratives, and all used the genre to justify faith and to proselytize. The precise and evocative use of Christian names and allusions produced calculated echoes from the literary past. Old Testament writings, the Beatitudes, Thomas à Kempis and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* provided writers with exemplary models of structure. Charlotte Maria Tucker summed up the genre's and the writer's aspirations as having "Various Paths, But One Goal".¹⁰

Perceptive historians have noted that mid-Victorian fiction always invoked religion in some way, reflecting the fact that religion and its language was thoroughly enmeshed in the nation's social fabric and literary understanding. In her study of the novel and nineteenth-century Anglican evangelicalism, Elisabeth Jay observed that Victorians understood that 'religion was native to the novel's sphere'.¹¹ Both fiction and prose writers 'borrowed' elements of religious idiom to add sonority and to bolster argument, although by no means was all fiction overtly "religious". Major and minor writers of fiction usually broached the subject somewhere within plots either by imputation, by reference, or even by direct biblical quotation. Indeed, most earnest readers would have regarded the absence of religion in some form as a serious fault. Literary historian, Robert Lee Wolff, has pointed out that 'of all the subjects that interested Victorians, and therefore pre-occupied their novelists — not love, or crime, or war, or sport, or ancestry, or even money — held their attention as much as religion'.¹² The centrality of religious idiom is affirmed throughout this study, particularly when literary tastes and markets are discussed. Contemporary questions concerning the hierarchical church establishment and its social role, the clergy, church controversies, doctrinal interpretation, individuals and congregations, and matters of faith and doubt were topics which novelists constantly raised and which absorbed Skene, Stretton and Tucker privately, and in their published writing.

One question recurs throughout this study. Why were Victorians, and particularly these writers, so openly obsessed with issues of morality and religion? After pointing to social sins and moral shortcomings, what certainties and truths did these particular women seek to provide through fiction? Were readers as interested in religious conversion as the writers themselves? Was this interest a sign of moral panic? Did readers undertake this type of reading to restore or find Christian faith,

¹⁰ A.L.O.E. [Charlotte Maria Tucker], *The Roby Family; or, Battling with the World*, Thomas Nelson & Sons, Edinburgh, 1878, p. 83.

¹¹ Elisabeth Jay, *The Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth Century Novel*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979, p. 2.

¹² Robert Lee Wolff, *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England*, Garland Publishing Inc., New York and London, 1977, pp. 1-2.

or merely to confirm their own views on the importance of sectarian or dogmatic differences? The answers to these questions are occasionally affirmative, but more often ambivalent. Remaining fragments of private correspondence reveal that a number of serious-minded readers who knew Skene's, Stretton's, and Tucker's works were moved enough to write to the authors directly on the subject of religion; others, perhaps, merely sought respectable fictional entertainment or suitable Sunday reading.

Though noted primarily for semi-religious or evangelical fiction, the writers transcended the semi-religious genre. Contributing articles to a broad range of popular periodicals, they wrote on travel, canvassed pressing social and temporal issues and investigated human emotions. Skene and Stretton produced social documentary pieces and some surprisingly good imaginative fiction. Their supposedly non-political writing was produced with intentional reforming and political motives. Furthermore, when writing for periodicals, writers had to keep up with the times. This thesis, however, is additionally concerned with the ways their semi-religious genre *also* moved with the times. As the writers advanced in years they expended much literary effort in maintaining the genre's vitality and interest, but this vitality was weakened by imitators. The personal visions of philanthropy which linked Skene, Stretton and Tucker so directly with the genre were ultimately displaced. A combination of causes—changes of heart, reading habits, and development in social policies—were responsible for the genre's ultimate demise.

Moving to matters of popular rather than critical reception, it is worth re-interrogating the texts to reflect upon Victorians' anxieties. We need to ask why Hesba Stretton's prose and fictional imagery had the power to make grown men weep. What were the convincing qualities in Felicia Skene's advocacy and polemic that caused some readers to change their minds on the burning question of capital punishment? Why did generations of parents and teachers choose Charlotte Maria Tucker's allegorical tales for the edification of their charges? Such questions probe the heart of Victorian earnestness and sentiments.

Methodology and Sources

My study seeks to dovetail biographies with a broader analysis of gender and genre, to explore the stylistic and thematic differences between these writers' approaches to fiction and other literary forms, and to sketch the significant overlaps

and convergences in their lives. These topics are viewed through a prismatic focus which shifts between the writers, their fiction, their philanthropy and their publishing. Overall, my aim has been to analyse the fundamental moral views and behaviour of three motivated women and provide a window on a group of writers and publishers at a particular historical moment.

Finding the documentary evidence to support this study has involved an extensive search on and off the shelves. The writers' descendants hold no records or diaries of their literary maiden aunts. Materials which emanated directly from the writers, from other individuals in their circle, and from philanthropic institutions and publishing houses have, however, emerged in repositories in England and Scotland, Australia and the United States. Correspondence with librarians and archivists in the United States also turned up a few valuable letters and articles now unobtainable in England. It is surprising that, despite her contemporary popularity, Hesba Stretton received no specialised scrutiny from contemporary biographers. Perhaps her date of death, in 1911, accounts for this omission. Skene's and Tucker's lives were documented shortly after their deaths by close admirers in true Victorian hagiographic tradition.

Fortunately, the scattered surviving letters, diaries, correspondence, wills and the writers' own published works have often revealed more about the private lives of these writers than perhaps they realised, or had ever wanted publicly known, and thus enable us to catch an echo of the women's voices. The correspondence which flowed between Skene, Stretton, and Tucker and the publishing houses of Blackwood, John Murray, Thomas Nelson and the Religious Tract Society revealed more of the commercial, religious and individual *raison d'être*s of a distinctive group and kindred literary group. Editorial notices in the *Publishers' Circular*, an invaluable and under-utilised resource, provided valuable comment on the state of the publishing world and the rise of fiction, as well as the individual authors' works.

Published reviews have played a vital role in assessing reception, as do the remaining private letters from admirers which reveal critical (and uncritical) reception outside formal literary circles. The archives of the Sisterhood of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, the Church of England Zenana Mission, and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and other charitable and philanthropic institutions, reveal details of the writers' 'behind-the-scenes' philanthropic work. What remains missing are the writers' original manuscripts. These women were prodigious writers, producing books and articles in rapid

succession over a number of years — collectively numbering over four hundred — yet, despite intensive searching, it seems that all have vanished. Like many women's documents, they were evidently not seen as sufficiently important to preserve.

Ironically, despite their extensive use of pseudonyms and the formal exclusion of women from the hierarchy of church and government, Skene, Stretton and Tucker all made "names" for themselves. Until the end of the nineteenth century their pseudonyms remained household names and they were widely respected for their philanthropic words and deeds. Although best known now amongst literary scholars, their books were read and re-read in private homes, public auditoriums, in circulating libraries, and schools. Neither pulped nor remaindered, their numerous re-printed books (and hence their presences), remained "on the shelf" for at least fifty years and sometimes longer.

In this thesis I suggest that the semi-religious fiction linked with Skene, Stretton and Tucker had a finite life-span. It flourished between the 1840s and 1880s, and gradually declined in the 1890s. This may be explained partly through changes in the actual delivery of public philanthropy, as well as conflicting social ideologies, opposition derived from growing scientific knowledge, and increasing religious doubt. Literary tastes changed as faithful readers became over-familiar with the large-eyed waifs, dutiful heroines and idealistic young heroes who inhabited this fictional world; younger readers looked to other fictional models for personal and spiritual inspiration. Changes in publishing practices also contributed to the demise. Writers no longer sold their copyrights as cheaply as before and, as the genre's popularity dropped, so too did the publishers' receipts and writers' royalties. What started as best-selling books and then became commercially safe re-editions, gradually diminished and disappeared from publishers' lists.

The biographical approach of this thesis aims to extend our knowledge of these women as individuals and as representative figures and place them in particular social and economic contexts. Within English middle and upper class society, these women represent three social echelons: Felicia Skene was a member of the Tory aristocracy with strong High Church connections which she fostered throughout her life; Charlotte Maria Tucker came from a successful entrepreneurial "East Indian" mercantile family and perpetuated her brothers' strong Evangelical and missionary traditions; Hesba Stretton came from the industrious ranks of the commercial lower middle class and was a member of a pious family of Methodist Dissenters. Each writer's family background, social milieu and religious

affiliations are discussed, though not with an intention to pin daughters to fathers' coat-tails nor to engage in any sustained psychological analysis. E. C. Rickards and Agnes Giberne, the early biographers of Skene and Tucker, and Hulda Friederichs, a journalist who wrote briefly about Stretton, treated their subjects' private and public lives uncritically and wrote with pronounced respect and caution. These biographers worked, of course, under the watchful eyes of family and friends still living. While respecting their perspectives and biographical studies as prime examples of literary fashion and Victorian feminine sensibilities, I have moved away from the idealized and authorised versions to explore the tensions and conflicts which troubled these women. They chose, against the flow of social orthodoxy, to live single, independent lives in a society which celebrated the institution of marriage, the virtues of feminine modesty and the joys of domesticity.

G.H. Lewes argued passionately in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1847 that the teachers of the people should be 'men of an unmistakeable vocation'.¹³ This was simply wishful thinking, for in the mid-Victorian era the peoples' teachers were overwhelmingly women excluded from teaching or learning in the seats of higher education. Such women often worked as private governesses and as teachers in boarding schools, dame schools, ragged schools, parochial schools, night schools, and Sunday Schools. Following this feminine path, we know that Stretton worked as a day-school teacher in Shrewsbury, Skene tutored boys and girls voluntarily at private schools in Oxford, and Tucker taught in both rural and city 'ragged' night schools and later in the mission school she helped establish in Amritsar in India. These women also "taught" through writing popular periodical literature and fiction; and, like many others, they saw this as their particular talent and their mission in life. The popular poet, writer and editor, Eliza Cook, a contemporary of Stretton, Skene and Tucker, summarized her literary mission as a desire to give 'feeble aid to the gigantic struggle for intellectual elevation'.¹⁴ The semi-religious fiction of Skene, Stretton and Tucker, similarly reached millions of readers and exhibited the 'unmistakeable vocation' which Lewes had lauded. Each writer espoused a wide spectrum of social and religious causes and championed moral reform and social change.

However personally committed themselves to reform and change, these writers had first to rely upon sympathetic or philanthropically-inclined publishers to spread the news. Overall, the genre of semi-religious publishing between the

13 Lewes, *loc. cit.*, p. 285.

14 'A Word to My Readers', *Eliza Cook's Journal*, No. 1, May 5, 1849, p. 1.

1840s and 1890s did yield profits. More often than not, these were ploughed back into subsidising philanthropic publishing and other projects. The publishers who worked with these writers thus play an important part in this study. They range from the monolithic Religious Tract Society to the smaller family publishing houses such as Joseph Masters, Thomas Nelson, William Blackwood and Sampson Low. Skene, Stretton and Tucker became best-selling authors and succeeded in the tough world of publishing; they were assisted by canny men of business who knew their publishing markets and selected old and new audiences with spectacular accuracy.

While these writers are not entirely unknown to historians or literary critics, the *extent* of their writing and philanthropic activities remains little known. In some respects, Felicia Skene and Charlotte Maria Tucker have been identified more by stereotype and literary genre than by the philanthropy which each practised and wrote. It is important to ask, therefore, what distinguished these writers from their now more famous peers, and to consider why their literary works have not been regarded as important literary and historical artefacts by historians. My aim has been to place equal emphasis upon the lives of the writers and upon their writings, and to do historical justice to both. While this study does not aim at exhaustive literary analysis or critique, it discusses specific writings which shaped and reflected the concerns of the writers, and affected the thinking of one or more generation of readers.

Underlying Skene's, Stretton's, and Tucker's fiction is a treasure house of social observation originally undertaken on foot. Some critics doubted their social veracity as the stock claim of social novelists but these writers — like their famous contemporary, Elizabeth Gaskell, — wrote in good faith and with gritty integrity.¹⁵ They were likewise jealous of their reputations. The authenticity of their social exploration is attested to by their own notes as well as the observations of others who saw them at work. Of course, Skene, Stretton and Tucker — like Florence Nightingale, Benjamin Disraeli and Charles Dickens — were not infallible nor immune from a factor some call the "Blue-Book" effect.¹⁶ Though informed by fictive conventions, their semi-religious fiction "founded on fact", nevertheless permits modern readers a clearer understanding of the shared social and religious

15 Elizabeth Gaskell and these writers were in complete accord on the issue of veracity in fiction. According to Gaskell's latest biographer, Gaskell believed in the moral function of art and in the duty to state the truth and expose social evils. Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, Faber and Faber, London, 1993, p. 236.

16 See, for example, Sheila M. Smith, 'Blue Books and Victorian Novelists', *Review of English Studies*, XXI, 1970, pp. 23-40 and Patrick Brantlinger, 'Bluebooks, the Social Organism, and the Victorian Novel', *Criticism*, 14, 1972, pp. 328-44.

concerns of countless mid-Victorians. When cast in graphic narrative fiction, their semi-autobiographical references and investigations gave millions of readers a better sense of their social worlds and their problems.

Even when writing negatively, Victorian critics often prove useful to historians. Many critics assumed that they understood or could correctly interpret their readers' frames of reference and social understanding; many believed that they "spoke the same language". And, of course, interested Victorians assiduously studied literary reviews. Some readers were apparently content to read *only* the reviews rather than the books themselves and were consequently influenced by the arbiters of tastes. Victorian critics claimed objectivity but, unsurprisingly, many were partial. Some championed "favourites" and others sought "victims"; deliberate puffery (that is, insiders' promotion on behalf of publishers) was not unknown. My intention is not to argue for the merits of *all* semi-religious fiction—some writers were undoubtedly tendentious and tedious. However, the brickbats of opinionated critics tend to be remembered, the bouquets are all too often forgotten.

Skene, Stretton and Tucker did receive accolades in their day from those who appreciated the awareness-raising qualities of this type of fiction, as well as its distinctive style and form. Modern readers thus stand to gain important insights on the subject of women's authorship by analysing carefully critics' comments and inferences as well as the prose itself. In a recent brief and perceptive study of Victorian fiction, Monica Correa Fryckstedt has alerted historians to the potential riches of reviews as a source of literary intelligence.¹⁷ Wherever possible, reviews and critiques of Skene's, Stretton's and Tucker's works have been consulted and many are quoted here in conjunction with contextual interpretation.

Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker, mindful of the need for change, injected the old-fashioned semi-religious novel with vivacity, emotional depth and some striking visual imagery. By these means they preserved, enlarged and transformed the genre. The successful semi-religious novels of the mid-nineteenth century played a vital role in religious indoctrination—that was part of the overall purpose, but the themes addressed also educated and enlightened a growing readership. Semi-religious novels written by women anxious to reach into the hearts, minds and purses of their readers sought to prick social and religious consciences and at the same time to entertain, engender hope and revive the

17 Monica Correa Fryckstedt, *On the Brink: English Novels of 1866*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Uppsala, 1989.

Christian belief in salvation. From the 1840s onwards such fiction included more lay and 'feminine' theology carefully interwoven into narratives which proclaimed a message of Divine and human love, practical amelioration, and of life-everlasting. But, in marked difference to the older-style didactic fiction, Skene, Stretton, and Tucker, and other writers, proffered graphic examples, social context, social realism and hence, credibility.

By the end of the nineteenth century, social and religious concerns had changed — some dramatically — along with literary fashion. By the 1890s, in the era of the "New Woman", the mandatory 'womanly' and religious characteristics once demanded from such writers, while still admired in some circles, were no longer regarded as essential qualities for writers working within religious genres of fiction. Such writers were seen by critics and *fin-de-siècle* obituarists as part of an older school of writers and philanthropists. The obituarist for the *Morning Post* plotted the change accurately, remarking of Miss Skene that 'she had belonged to a generation which it would be idle to deny is passing out of fashion today'.¹⁸ The same was said elsewhere, in so many words, about Charlotte Maria Tucker and Hesba Stretton.

Although the literary works of Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker were inevitably outpaced by newcomers and new ideas, their visions and the collective impact of their writing upon generations of readers should not be underestimated. As churchwomen and "useful" believers, these writers have been all too easily categorized as conventional women conforming to the tenets of dominant ideology. Yet they were complex and contradictory individuals; each was conservative, but in other ways a radical reformer and a subversive who challenged the church, rejected matrimony and refused to accept the *status-quo*.

I have divided the thesis into three broad sections. The first, "The Woman Question", explores the changing interpretations of Victorian womanhood, focusing on the ways in which the images of single women involved in philanthropy and in writing have been mediated by Victorian contemporaries and by modern historians. I reflect on the categories of "spinster", "maiden aunt" and "dutiful daughter", and consider how contemporaries viewed the status and position of women such as Skene, Stretton and Tucker who embraced this, often vexed, role as a matter of a personal choice. My aim is to show the ways in which these women related to the

18 Obituary, F.M.F. Skene, *Morning Post*, 11 Oct. 1899.

world and to each other through the distinction of religious affiliations and beliefs.¹⁹

In this section, I also discuss the ways in which individual women's voices might be heard more clearly. Public utterances and private reflections provide obvious primary sources, but women's voices may also be captured through the genre of semi-religious literature. This fiction has been sadly under-explored as an historical source yet it is rich in women's ideas about this world and the next. Finally, I explore the subtle ways in which the language and traits of modesty were used by women writers to at once speak out and veil demands to achieve specific philanthropic aims.

The second section, "Private Worlds", is devoted to the individual biographies of Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker. I concentrate upon the details of the individual's early life, including family, education, religion, sexuality, friends, religious and literary mentors, and on the writers' first steps into single careers which were ultimately devoted to writing and philanthropy. The focus is placed upon the subject's emotional history, her inner struggles and her necessary accommodations, upon her development of self, and her sense of spiritual mission which had still to conform to a prescribed social role. I draw upon varied sources of inspiration—philosophical, theological and personal—which motivated each writer's religious beliefs and social actions. The creation of positive female images in fiction also mirrors the writers' self-images. A representative range of the writers' works are used to illustrate the ways which they referred to women's religious values, spirituality and moral strengths, and to women's utopian visions. Fictional illustrations of these values reflected both the personal aspirations and a wider cultural ideal which cast women in the role of regenerators of society.

The final section, "Public Lives", encompasses each writer's literary debut and her subsequent successes and failures in the literary world. Here, critics loom almost as large as the writers since they played a major, if sometimes, unintentional role in establishing the reputation of women writers. The credibility of the genre

19 I have adopted the concept of status rather than class. Status permits a finer definition of these women within the middle and upper classes, and it was a concept which Victorians recognised. Moreover, writers of fiction, including Skene, Stretton and Tucker, employed the concept freely and minutely to describe the echelons of English society. M. Jeanne Peterson, in her study of the women of the Paget family has adopted a similar approach. Peterson also uses the concept of 'rank' and recognises the subtle distinctions which Victorians made between "gentlewomen" and other women of the middle classes. M.J. Peterson, *Family, Love, and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1989, p. x.

and the subject of the popular reception of semi-religious fiction is discussed, linking the separate activities of literature with philanthropy which was a typically Victorian desire.²⁰ The role of particular philanthropic publishers is touched upon, together with the specific causes supported by Skene, Stretton and Tucker, about which they wrote vigorously and prolifically. The demise of religious fiction is discussed in the final chapter "Graceful Exits". Here, the literary and philanthropic contributions of a passing generation of women are reassessed.

The original genre of high Victorian semi-religious literature did disappear as the writers' styles became unfashionable. Many of the books now gather dust, 'on the shelf', but the literary inheritance and the voices of the writers have not been altogether silenced nor lost. Reflecting upon the historical context of these writers and the genre of semi-religious fiction revivifies the writers' contributions and allows modern readers to consider both their philanthropic and literary roles and, importantly, the tangible and intangible legacies they left.

For long enough, these spinster-writers have carried a double burden and suffered from what, even in 1847, the *Dublin Review* admitted were 'the prejudices of the olden times, when a lady's business with literature was limited to her prayer book'.²¹ It is timely, a century or so after their deaths, that these women should be reviewed. Literary reconsideration of Victorian semi-religious fiction has already furnished key insights into the experiences of these and other women writers as well as the formative role of semi-religious literature.²² Skene, Stretton, and Tucker bear the process of scrutiny and redefinition well. As historical subjects and agents of change they deserve to regain some of their long lost stature.

20 Uglow, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

21 Unsigned article, 'Our Lady Novelists', *Dublin Review*, Vol. XXIII, Sept. 1847, p. 290.

22 Elisabeth Jay has analysed the genre itself in great detail in her study, *The Religion of the Heart*, *op. cit.*, She has also begun the process of 'restoring' another important mid-nineteenth century writer in *The Autobiography of Margaret Oliphant: The Complete Text*, Edited and introduced by Elisabeth Jay, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990. For Hesba Stretton, see Patricia Demers, 'Mrs Sherwood and Hesba Stretton: The Letter and the Spirit of Evangelical Writing of and for Children', *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century England*, James Holt McGavran, Jr. (ed.), The University of Georgia Press, Athens & London, 1991. For Felicia Skene, see, 'The Body in Victorian Religion', unpublished paper, M. Jeanne Peterson, Indiana University, Bloomington. (I am grateful to Professor Peterson for sharing her work with me in our endeavours to re-discover the works of Felicia Skene). For Felicia Skene, see also, 'Female Philanthropy and Women Novelists 1840-1870, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Brenda Mothersole, Brunel University, London, Sept. 1989.

Woman's Power and the Single Woman

I remember when you were a girl, and all of the women of your age were going to the women's club, and you were the only one who did not go. I remember when you were a girl, and all of the women of your age were going to the women's club, and you were the only one who did not go. I remember when you were a girl, and all of the women of your age were going to the women's club, and you were the only one who did not go.

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The Woman Question

The woman question is a question of the rights of women, and of the rights of men. It is a question of the rights of women to the same rights as men, and of the rights of men to the same rights as women. It is a question of the rights of women to the same rights as men, and of the rights of men to the same rights as women. It is a question of the rights of women to the same rights as men, and of the rights of men to the same rights as women.

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Chapter I

Women's Voices and the Single Voice

I sometimes think that consoling is one of the most delightful employments given to God's servants. It is pleasanter than teaching; far far more so than reproving others, or struggling against evil, or examining our own hearts. I would give a great deal to have your influence ... but the Almighty has not been pleased to grant me this. Perhaps He will some day. (Charlotte Maria Tucker).¹

It is a fortunate epoch in the history of a country when a virtue *quelconque* becomes the fashion. This is notably the case with the marvellous impulse which has been given in our age to the virtue of charity—charity, that is, the common acceptance of the word, as exercised towards the poor. (Felicia Skene).²

We are not now in bondage to anyone. (Hesba Stretton).³

The writers, Charlotte Maria Tucker, Felicia Skene, and Hesba Stretton recorded these public and private reflections in the mid-1860s. Even in such brevity, these comments hint about each woman, about her daily life, her work, personal philosophy and faith. The extracts are taken from Charlotte Maria Tucker's private family correspondence, from Felicia Skene's lengthy article on the subject of modern charity and philanthropy, and from Hesba Stretton's diary which she called her 'Log Book'. These documents evoke individual lives and echo women's voices.

Skene, Stretton, and Tucker were close contemporaries. Charlotte Maria Tucker and Felicia Mary Frances Skene were born in 1821, and Hesba Stretton (or Sara Smith as she was christened), almost eleven years later in 1832. Although never formally acquainted and probably knowing little of each other's personal circumstances, they cannot have escaped knowledge of each other's writings. By the mid-1860s, each had become a noted writer of semi-religious or evangelical fiction, a literary genre in which these women both specialized and succeeded. As professional writers and avid readers they were familiar with the contents of the leading periodicals of the day and undoubtedly kept a careful eye on the market. Skene and Stretton, like many other writers, began their literary careers writing articles for popular periodicals and continued to contribute.

1 Charlotte Maria Tucker to her sister, Mrs Laura Hamilton, letter, 13 Sept. 1863. Agnes Giberne, A Lady of England: The Life and Letters of Charlotte Maria Tucker, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1895, p. 123.

2 [F.M.F. Skene], 'Penitentiaries and Reformatories', Odds & Ends, Vol. 1. No. 6, Edmonston & Douglas, Edinburgh, 1865, p. 3.

3 Hesba Stretton, *Log Book*, 2[4]? Aug. 1868. MSS 5556, Shrewsbury Local Studies Library, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England. [Henceforth, *Log Book*].

As perceptive Victorian readers, Skene, Stretton and Tucker would have been keenly aware of each other's philanthropic interests and church affiliations, disclosed by the settings, social issues and pious utterances which each writer worked into her fiction and prose. By the mid-1860s, despite the use of pen names, each woman's literary voice and social opinions had been heard and was, on evidence of sales, acknowledged by the reading public and critics. This was ironic since none of the writers had ever spoken from a public platform; although their writing was extremely popular, they remained pseudonymous. As professional writers they had contacts and contracts with influential publishers but, with the exception of Hesba Stretton, they never met with their publishers in the years they dealt with them. Their collective readership could eventually be counted in terms of millions but as individual women they were and remained essentially unknown — read and heard but not seen.

Success in the literary world was achieved on the strengths of the authors' talents; their writing reached a wide readership and, importantly, was bolstered by religious content. Moreover, the writers skilfully utilised commonplace situations to address contemporary social issues which had first been reliably explored through personal social investigation. A further element which contributed to success were the proclamations about particular philanthropic or reform issues which the writers trumpeted in introductions, prefaces and footnotes. Charlotte Maria Tucker and Hesba Stretton were particularly skilful in this area. The writers' heart-rending exhortations had the potential to turn a simple preface into an attention-grabbing artform. This device not only captured the attention of the book-buying public who wished to support various and specific philanthropic causes, but it also suited the combined business and altruistic interests of philanthropic publishers whose enterprises and worthy causes stood to gain from healthy sales.⁴

Skene, Stretton and Tucker were members of a diverse philanthropic community animated by biblical injunctions and the desire to ameliorate distressing social conditions. Judging from the many writings produced by these literary missionaries Charlotte Tucker was an educationalist at heart, Felicia Skene was committed to the individual moral and economic restitution of prisoners and prostitutes, and Hesba Stretton was devoted to the legal protection of women and children and removal of the twin ills of poverty and illiteracy. By writing about these issues in fiction and prose, each writer both aired her

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A full discussion of sales and profits appears later in **Chapter VI**, *Good Works and Good Books, Publishers and Philanthropy (1860s - 1880s)*.

views and deliberately entered the public realm. She simultaneously found an independent voice and achieved a platform from which to address an unseen public.⁵

Literary success was vital for both philanthropic and personal reasons and yet, in the epigraphs chosen to open this chapter, Tucker, Skene, and Stretton do not allude directly to their literary achievements—the observance of a lifetime's habit of modesty clearly forbade this, even in private. In the act of committing such essential thoughts to paper, these women reflected deeply upon their personal faith and their desire to be useful. Usefulness had become a *leit-motiv* in civic life and a personal motive close to the hearts of many women; possessing a sense of “usefulness” was regarded as deeply important for the creation of private and personal self esteem and for the creation of a public, if modest, identity. Although the private and public sentiments expressed by these writers about life's purpose were unique to them, their pleadings were not atypical. Significantly, as a set of kindred preoccupations, they reflect attitudes and testimonies found elsewhere in other contemporary women's writings.

Purposeful writing of this kind encompasses what Patricia Meyer Spacks has called women's ‘high tradition of spiritual autobiography’, and it was indeed ubiquitous.⁶ F.K. Prochaska, for example, has listed four hundred published contemporary memoirs, autobiographies and biographies which deal specifically with matters of religion, practical philanthropy and ‘usefulness’.⁷ Feminist historians working on women's unpublished diaries have also conceded that women's religious aspirations were a most potent source of inspiration.⁸ Referring to the writings of Frances Power Cobbe who was, as it happens, a long-standing friend and confidante of Felicia Skene, Barbara Caine has noted that Cobbe's religious beliefs were both central to her feminist commitment and provided a framework through which she could articulate her feminist beliefs.⁹ Exalted writing therefore represents far more than passive aspiration. It was characteristic of many women's writings and remarkably indicative of what W.E. Houghton and others referred

⁵ Details of all the known published works of Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker are listed separately in the Bibliography.

⁶ Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination*, Basic Books, New York, 1981, p. 248.

⁷ F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980, pp. 274-289.

⁸ Harriet Blodgett has also examined the central and reoccurring themes of religion, ‘good works’, and philanthropy in her study, *Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen's Private Diaries*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1988. See also, Barbara S. Kanner, *Women in English History, 1800-1914, A Guide to Research*, Garland & Co., New York, 1987-8. In the nineteenth-century American context, Lori D. Ginzberg's recent study, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States*, reiterates the central importance of philanthropy and religion in American women's lives in the same period, c.1850-1900.

⁹ Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p. 12.

to as the Victorian frame of mind.¹⁰ This embraced usefulness within new understandings of active benevolence, and whilst many more women confined such aspirations to private diaries and journals, the sentiment of usefulness was, nevertheless, well understood. For example, George Eliot's heroine, Dorothea Brooke who appeared in *Middlemarch* in 1871-2, accurately articulated this yearning. The novel attracted an immediate flow of correspondence from women who identified with Dorothea Brooke's 'finely touched spirit' and vision of herself as 'Dorcas under the New'.¹¹ Thus, usefulness might be viewed as a specifically female variation on the theme of universal public-spiritedness.

When read separately, Tucker's, Skene's and Stretton's testimonies hint at 'usefulness' and bear the implicit burden of personal experience and individual circumstance. For them, usefulness was not self-abnegating service, but a positive and creative step towards an acceptable yet unobtrusive form of personal autonomy. When viewed more broadly these testimonies connect with thoughts commonly expressed by other women — not necessarily literary women nor even women of the same class — who were troubled equally by the pressing social issues of the day and the restrictions and conventions placed upon them. The particular language, style and tone adopted by each writer to express her feelings becomes still more instructive however, when we learn more of the individual circumstances and religious affiliations of each writer.¹²

Charlotte Tucker's testimony reveals her deep sense of religious vocation to Laura, her favourite sister. Though discussing so personal a matter, she wrote with a constrained formality for Charlotte's sisterly communications were often shared with other members of her family, and she must have been conscious of the image she projected. Felicia Skene, on the other hand, was writing on the subject of penitentiaries for the Scottish journal, *Odds & Ends*. In this more public context she was able to address an unseen and unknown readership as an "expert" (which she undoubtedly was), and adopted an almost masculine tone, speaking inclusively of "we". Conceivably she did this deliberately to disguise her gender. With this ambiguous literary device, she achieved

10 W.E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1957. See Chapter 11, pp. 278-9. Gerald B. Kauvar and Gerald C. Sorensen's collected anthology of contemporary Victorian essays also provides a judicious and helpful cross section of writings on the Victorians' 'states of mind ... current thinking ... and breadth of opinion' covering topics such as usefulness and the instinct for reform. *The Victorian Mind, An Anthology* edited and selected by Gerald B. Kauvar and Gerald C. Sorensen, with a Preface by Jane Fawcett, Cassell, London, in association with the Victorian Society, 1969.

11 George Eliot's novel, *Middlemarch*, was acclaimed by critics and scores of women who identified with the religious and benevolent characteristics of Dorothea Brooke. Many wrote to the author in admiration of her profound psychological understanding of a woman's heart. Gordon S. Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography*, Penguin Books, 1985, Harmondsworth, U.K. Chapter XIII.

12 This aspect of religious life is explored in more depth in the biographical section of the thesis, *Private Worlds*.

a directness which at once commended the topic and *her* opinion to readers. On other occasions she deliberately adopted a masculine tone when writing sermons for a clerical friend. Miss Skene often received letters addressed to "Dear Sir" or "Rev. Sir", and she did nothing to disabuse readers of their beliefs.¹³

Hesba Stretton wrote her blunt declaration of independence for her own benefit as a means of personal encouragement, expressing a practical desire for economic independence which she knew could only be gained through working. At the time of writing, she was overjoyed at receiving a badly-needed and sizeable payment for an article. In this defiant and triumphant Log Book entry for 1868, she wrote of her burning desire for freedom from the 'bondage' of genteel poverty. This private and uncompromising exclamation was borne from a long struggle to live by the pen and establish an identity as a writer. *Thoughts* such as these are filled with lofty personal, religious and civic aspirations, but also carry a just discernible sense of tension and frustration; in Hesba Stretton's case, of outright anger.

Whatever tone these writers adopted to express themselves, their writings echo the heartfelt cries of many similar women. Reading between the lines, such writings reveal women's desire for independence and also for influence. A desire for influence was usually only espoused openly by conservative and religious women when they referred to *moral* influence. To express openly a desire for economic, legal or political influence and autonomy was thought by many women, and most men, to be an unwomanly aspiration. While reflecting upon their individual situations, however, Skene, Stretton and Tucker joined the periphery of the debate concerning women's 'proper' and fulfilling role in Victorian society and so, in consequence, contributed distinctively to the Woman Question.

Single Voices

The 'Woman Question' was a singular expression adopted by journalists, essayists and others to denote the plurality of debates which focused on women's role in Victorian society. Enmeshed within this complex question were contested interpretations of what commentators believed constituted true womanhood and what women's social place should and could be. In many practical respects, the questions appeared to relate more to the lives of middle and upper class women, since working class women seemed to be excluded from the forefront of debate conducted in the press. When confronting

¹³ As editor of the *Churchman's Companion*, a High Church journal which Skene edited for almost twenty years, she was often addressed as 'Dear Sir'. See also, E.C. Rickards, *Felicia Skene At Oxford: A Memoir*, John Murray, London, 1902, p. 314, p. 328.

many of the issues—ideological, political, religious, moral and domestic—writers of both sexes became polarised when attempting to understand and interpret the forces thought to be either fuelling or stalling change. For conservatives, such change was threatening and disturbing. Feminism still had no recognisable name but, by the mid 1860s, there were a perceptible number of vocal and strong-minded women and men such as Harriet Taylor Mill, Ann Richelieu Lamb, Emily Sherriff, Barbara Leigh Smith (Bodichon), Emily Davies, John Stuart Mill, E.P Hood and others who ventured to discuss such issues as women's employment, women's religious vocation, women's political and legal rights, education and, importantly, the right to remain single.¹⁴

The discussion was not new, but the 1851 Census of Great Britain disclosed officially the number of unmarried women in the population and pushed the debate forward. The figures revealed almost 1.5 million unmarried women aged between twenty and forty, and approximately 360,000 unmarried women over the age of forty. The 'spinster problem', was thus exposed and discussed. In percentage terms, these figures confirmed that as many as thirty per cent of women in the child-bearing age group (that is, between twenty and forty years), were unmarried, and that women outnumbered men in this age group by approximately six per cent.¹⁵ This, many believed, was a major imbalance in the sexes and constituted a serious problem.¹⁶ Some commentators such as W.R. Greg who wrote widely on social problems, saw the imbalance as a severe difficulty for those women forced to find suitable employment and "fend" for themselves. According to Greg, writing for a living offered no solutions for women, nor did it provide income.¹⁷ Others insisted that spinsterhood, if deliberately chosen, was

¹⁴ Emily Sherriff, for example, argued that it was better to remain unmarried than to marry a man unequal in intellect or worth of character. Emily Sherriff, *Intellectual Education and Its Influence on the Character and Happiness of Women*, John W. Parker, London 1858, p. 276. Two useful studies, Janet Horowitz Murray's, *Strong-Minded Women and Other Lost Voices from Nineteenth Century England*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1982, and Patricia Hollis's, *Women in Public 1850-1900: Documents of the Victorian Women's Movement*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1979, provide comprehensive extracts from the spectrum of contemporary arguments raised for and against women in this period.

¹⁵ Michael Anderson has provided analysis and a comprehensive set of tables which provide breakdowns by occupation and employment, location, single men and women at 1851, position in household and employment in his article 'The Social Position of Spinsters in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Journal of Family History*, Winter, 1984, pp. 377-393.

¹⁶ I have used figures presented by Patricia Jalland in her analysis of the 1851 Census. She has pointed out that Victorians had not yet fully perceived that the primary cause of this demographic imbalance was the higher death rate of male babies. Other causes such as high rates of male emigration became clearer in the 1881 Census of England and Wales. Patricia Jalland, 'Victorian Spinsters: Dutiful Daughters, Desperate Rebels and the Transition to the New Women', in *Exploring Women's Past*, edited by Patricia Crawford (et al), George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, London, Boston, 1983, p. 131.

¹⁷ W.R. Greg, 'Why Are Women Redundant', *National Review*, 15, 1862, p. 436. William Rathbone Greg (1809-1889), was a Unitarian, essayist, economist and editor. He had little sympathy for women writers (with the exception of Harriet Martineau), and was particularly critical of women novelists. See, for example, his essay, 'The False Morality of the Lady Novelists', *National Review*, Vol. 8, Jan. 1859.

potentially a great problem for the future wellbeing of the nation. Even J.S. Mill referred specifically to the plight of spinsters - 'the greatly increasing number of women' who were denied the 'opportunity' of marriage.¹⁸

Some, like Richard Carlile, believed that premeditated celibacy in both sexes was unnatural and held that spinsterhood created a 'sort of sub-animal class' of frustrated and fidgety women. This view still prevailed amongst many contemporary doctors, theorists and novelists.¹⁹ Martha Vicinus has noted in her illuminating study of single women that spinsters were regarded as "deviant" because of their refusal to marry.²⁰ But many sensible women, including Skene, Stretton and Tucker, whose statistical details were captured in this census, did not necessarily see themselves as "deviants" or "old maids" and were able to envisage their future as contributing members of society. Clearly, they were not rejected or redundant women forced to emigrate or degenerate. And, as Joan Perkin has argued in a recent study of women and marriage in nineteenth-century England, 'it was *not* the aim of all women to marry'.²¹ Elizabeth M. Sewell, a friend of Felicia Skene's and herself a writer of semi-religious fiction, acknowledged the benefits of spinsterhood. In 1865, she wrote publicly, although anonymously, in *Principles of Education*, that:

An unmarried life, in truth, may be (if people choose to make it so), a life of great *usefulness*, great interest, bringing to the mind a pleasant sense of independence and freedom, blessed with much inner peace.²²

Serious questioning of the institution of marriage had been undertaken earlier by Owenites, radicals and intellectuals in the crusade against marriage, but it is evident that conservative women such as Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker who might have been expected to make suitable matches, never seriously contemplated marriage. They viewed the status of spinster positively, provided one could live by the pen. Spinsterhood offered possibilities for independence and freedom. Miss Skene, for example, referred to her unmarried state as one of 'single blessedness'.²³ Skene, Stretton and Tucker made personal choices to remain celibate and devote their lives to various philanthropic causes, but they had anticipated a public debate upon single-blessedness which got underway in the 1870s when attitudes towards spinsterhood changed perceptibly.

¹⁸ J.S. Mill, *On The Subjection of Women*, 1861.

¹⁹ Richard Carlile had classified unmarried women over twenty five in this way in 1828 in his treatise, *Every Woman's Book or What is Love*.

²⁰ Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1900*, Virago Press, London, 1985, p. 36.

²¹ Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in the Nineteenth Century*, Routledge, London, 1989, p. 226.

²² [Elizabeth M. Sewell], *Principles of Education*, Vol. II, London, 1865, p. 113. [Emphasis added].

²³ Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

Although Skene, Tucker and Stretton made no direct reference to the 'Woman Question' and all it entailed, they touched upon it even in these brief epigraphs. Charlotte Tucker referred to the difficulties she faced in achieving the Divine purpose of her work. She wrote of her lack of personal influence, hinting that her married sister, a wife and mother, at least had influence over her own family. Felicia Skene implied that women, free of the bonds of matrimony, had time to devote to philanthropic work: As philanthropists 'we must do the *most*, as well as the best we can'.²⁴ Hesba Stretton regarded marriage as an impediment for many women and for some, a form of domestic slavery. She predicted (correctly as it turned out), that only one of her sisters would ever marry:

purposed that one of us do make it our business to get married; and the others to help all they can.²⁵

Marriage was evidently regarded by Hesba and her sisters, (she had three), as more of a sacrifice rather than a sacrament.

From the passing comments they made on the subject of matrimony, Felicia Skene, Charlotte Maria Tucker and Hesba Stretton evidently also regarded marriage as an impediment to philanthropy and public service. Skene allegedly preferred the role of match-maker to that of wife. She encouraged prisoners who had 'lived in sin' before imprisonment to marry on release — her niece found a packet of cheap wedding rings which Miss Skene provided to bridegrooms to expedite the marriage ceremony — but she rejected proposals of marriage herself and joked about the boredom of having to face the same 'snuffy old gentleman sitting the opposite side of the fire!'²⁶ Charlotte Tucker was even more explicit. She wrote a poem on the subject of celibacy and service for women in the Church of England Zenana Mission. Her fierce views emerge in the lines, 'Let all Mission Miss Sahibas single remain, - If they don't, they step out of their proper domain, - And can never be Mission Miss Sahibas again!'²⁷ Hesba Stretton believed strongly that marriage for women was a dangerous and often violent trap, and wrote a cryptic comment on the subject of 'domestic slavery' in her Log Book in 1860 — 'Opinion strengthened that the country is not so civilised as we believed it to be; and that

²⁴ Skene, *Penitentiaries and Reformatories*, p. 21.

²⁵ Stretton, *Log Book*, 'Good Friday', April 18, 1862.

²⁶ Rickards, *Felicia Skene at Oxford*, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

²⁷ Charlotte Maria Tucker wrote in a poem of the necessity for Zenana women missionaries like herself to remain single. "Rules and Regulations" was written in Amritsar in India in 1876. Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 316. [The full text is quoted later in Charlotte Tucker's biographical chapter, "Charlotte Maria Tucker (1821-1893), "A Lady of England" - Accidental Feminist"].

domestic slavery will be introduced'.²⁸ Many of Stretton's works of fiction referred to wife and child abuse and she later explored this theme thoroughly in one of her tales, *Under The Old Roof*, written in celebration of the passage of the Married Women's Property Act of 1882.²⁹

From these and from the other materials which Skene, Stretton and Tucker wrote, we begin to imagine and re-construct these individuals, not as prim, acquiescent, and barren spinster novelists as they have been conventionally portrayed, but as conscientious and courageous writers who made deliberate and sometimes difficult choices to live as active, celibate, and independent women. Although conservative, Skene, Stretton and Tucker, travelled well beyond the territorial and gendered limits traditionally set for single, mid-century nineteenth-century women. Each one successfully traversed orthodox boundaries without noticeably transgressing the unwritten rules of conventional female propriety.

To detail the lives of these individuals is to argue with a body of opinion which has long labelled them prudes,³⁰ amateurs,³¹ busy-bodies³² and "lady-pens".³³ It also reveals the paradox that they could be women's advocates *and* social conservatives. Skene, Stretton and Tucker, like many other women writers of semi-religious fiction and prose, were courageous women who tackled philanthropic tasks and writing projects which would have daunted lesser souls. To be sure, they produced pious works, but still more novels and tales, memoirs, devotional works and institutional pamphlets, as well as prose articles and serial fiction for popular periodicals. Skene and Stretton in particular, by virtue of the "social evils" they tackled in fiction and practical philanthropy, were no prudes. In spite of their intense personal religiosity, all three extended their writing beyond the limits of the Common Prayer book and into the wider community.

28 Hesba Stretton, *Log Book*, August [?], 1860. Stretton may well have been influenced by the enlightened clergyman E.P. Hood, a fellow Congregationalist, who had commented upon the anomalous position of women. He wrote in 'The Position of Women', that 'the law of England does make marriage a legal slavery to the woman. E.P. Hood, *The Age and Its Architects*, 1850.

29 Hesba Stretton, *Under The Old Roof*, Religious Tract Society, London, 1882.

30 Elaine Showalter argues, for example, that writers such as Charlotte Yonge and Dinah Craik (both writers of semi-religious fiction), were aware that the "feminine" novel 'stood for feebleness, ignorance, prudery, refinement, propriety and sentimentality'. Elaine Showalter, *A Literature Of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, Virago, London, 1978, p. 20.

31 Robert Lee Wolff wrote that Felicia Skene 'remained an amateur at writing fiction'. *Op. cit.*, p. 148 This point is highly debatable. Felicia Skene was paid as an editor and as an author.

32 Brian Harrison in 'State Intervention and Moral Reform' in *Pressure From Without in Early Victorian England*, Patricia Hollis (ed.), appears to acquiesce with the view that 'philanthropists were despised as busy-bodies and meddlers', p. 308.

33 John Gibson Lockhart, one of John Murray's most trusted editors, disparaged both "foreign pens" and "lady-pens". *At John Murray's: Records of a Literary Circle 1843-1892*, by George Paston [Emily Morse Symonds], John Murray, London, 1932, p. 29.

Their religious conservatism has led some historians to overlook signs of incipient feminism. Writers such as Skene, Stretton and Tucker (and others in their generation), have been viewed as prisoners of Victorian gender ideology or as hapless victims of false consciousness,³⁴ or, worse still, as the “literary handmaidens of the church”.³⁵ Nonetheless, the ideals of womanhood that they created in fiction, the ‘woman-centredness’ of their diverse interests, and their independent lives suggests strongly that they were much closer in thought to mid-Victorian feminists than has previously been appreciated. Recent work by Gail Malmgreen recognises the transcendent and liberating force of religion which empowered women, but also gave women of all classes personal courage and a sense of mission.³⁶ Barbara Caine’s study of Victorian feminism has also allowed for more diversity in interpreting the complexity of feminist ideas of the mid-nineteenth century. Without connecting the history of Victorian feminism with the history of nineteenth-century religion, she concedes the centrality of religious questions in the lives of Victorian feminists.³⁷

Skene, Stretton and Tucker had the welfare of other women at heart; Skene’s work with prostitutes and female prisoners, Stretton’s work for abused wives and children, and Tucker’s work with Indian women ‘imprisoned’ in *Zenanas*, all attest to the woman-centredness of their endeavours. Malmgreen makes three observations germane to this study: first, that religion was many things for women, including ‘an arena for rebellion against the prescriptions of male authority’, second, that ‘women took to the platform on behalf of religion before they were stirred by politics’ and finally, ‘that religious writing offered middle-class women a chance to be self-supporting even before the hey-day of the great female novelists.’³⁸ For these writers, as we will learn, the printed page served as well as any platform.

What enabled these three women to survive and flourish in a society which discriminated against women, and single women in particular? As Martha Vicinus has argued in her study of independent women in mid-nineteenth century England,

34 See, for example, Mary Poovey’s work, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, Chicago University Press, Chicago. Poovey discusses the indoctrination of women and notes the polarities of debate between feminist historians who have ‘emphasized women’s ability to construct communities [and literature] within the terms of the dominant ideology’ and those who have emphasized the limitations imposed by this ideology. Chapter 1, *passim*, pp. 1-23.

35 Walter Besant made this comment in the latter part of the nineteenth century in relation to the women who wrote for the Society for the Promulgation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK). Besant suggested that the SPCK exploited these writers. In some cases he may well have been correct, but as I will argue, many women regarded their writing as a charitable mission.

36 Gail Malmgreen (ed.), *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930*, Croom Helm, London & Sydney, 1986.

37 Caine, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

38 Malmgreen, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-9.

'[U]nderpinning all women's work was a sense of religious commitment. Single women of vastly different convictions felt consecrated in their work to the highest cause'.³⁹ Christian beliefs and values endowed Skene, Stretton and Tucker with a personal vision and the courage and strength to pursue specific, and often difficult, philanthropic work. Theirs was religion not merely of sympathetic feelings or 'ceremonial observance'⁴⁰ but a religion of action. Each woman was ultimately endowed with a special status which extended beyond the confines of the drawing room, as a direct result of combining philanthropic expertise, knowledge of the "real world" gained through social exploration, and literary achievements. Thus endowed, each woman was enabled to move easily between the public and the private spheres, and each was able through writing to add her distinctive voice to public debate, as well as carve out a specialised social niche for herself. These conservative women essentially redefined their own lives and had no need of W.R. Greg's pity for 'the hundreds and thousands of women ... scattered across all ranks ... [who] have to carve out artificial and painfully sought occupations for themselves'.⁴¹

Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker were plainly not alone in this endeavour. Unrepentant spinsters who rejected conventional female goals were plentiful and are now easily identified in the indomitable figures of Harriet Martineau, Florence Nightingale, Anne Richelieu Lamb, Mary Russell Mitford, Adelaide Procter, Emily Davies, Emily Faithfull and Frances Mary Buss. For legal, religious, sexual, spiritual and career reasons, these women refused to submit to the bonds of matrimony. Vicinus has shown how other single women took part in what she termed a 'revolt against redundancy' and has suggested that in Victorian society, unmarried women were feared because they were potentially a source of economic instability. She argues that many women managed to breach traditional boundaries by 'carrying the domestic world into the public [world]'.⁴² The phenomenon of single women eager to take up a career having reached an age when they could safely 'put aside any pretense [*sic*] of being marriageable and concentrate upon their own interests' was, of necessity, widespread.⁴³ Joan Perkin also recounts women's reluctance to marry, describing it in more revolutionary terms as the 'ultimate rebellion'.⁴⁴ Contrary to the novelists' images of withered old maids,⁴⁵ and cartoonists' images of spinsters "on the shelf", compelled as

³⁹ Vicinus, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁴⁰ J.S. Mill had thus disparagingly described the religion of spinsters in his famous essay, *On the Subjection of Women*.

⁴¹ Greg, 'Why Are Women Redundant', *loc. cit.*, p. 436.

⁴² Vicinus, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴⁴ Perkin, *Women and Marriage*, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

⁴⁵ Sir Christopher Cheverel from George Eliot's novel, *Scenes of a Clerical Life*, (1857), could not abide spinsters - he begged his niece, Tina, to marry. 'I can't have you withering away into an

W.R. Greg lamented, 'to lead an independent and incomplete existence on their own',⁴⁶ many women like Skene, Stretton and Tucker refused matrimony and the vocation of a biological family.⁴⁷

Public Utterances

The mid-Victorian age produced a visible generation of women writers who shared sensibilities manifest in firm religious conviction and social conservatism. Paradoxically, it was by conforming outwardly to convention that these women confronted pressing social problems usually considered to be beyond the understanding and power of respectable women to ameliorate or change. Through fiction and other genres, Skene, Stretton and Tucker were able to participate in wider public debates. For example, Miss Skene's article on penitentiaries and reformatories criticizing "moral red-tapeism" and rule-bound charity characteristic of the British penitentiary system illustrates her 'voice' on this particular issue. (Skene argued that women were discouraged from voluntarily entering penitentiaries because of the severe and punishing regimes.) On its appearance in the press, her friend, the cleric, Dean E.B. Ramsay of Edinburgh, congratulated Skene for expressing 'such a plain-speaking opinion' on a vexed subject. He praised her as a 'bold woman' but feared she had 'too much truth in her statements'.⁴⁸

Hesba Stretton also participated in wider debates and allowed her name to be used beyond fictional genres to attract attention to various causes.⁴⁹ Well informed through personal observations and knowledge of poverty in Manchester, Liverpool and London, her visits to institutions—workhouses, refuges, orphanages—and close reading of contemporary reports and articles, she publicly advocated, among many other causes, the

old maid'. Old maids made him 'dismal'. *Scenes*, Vol. 1, p. 273. (Did this echo George Eliot's personal view of spinsters?)

46 Greg, *loc. cit.*, p. 338-339.

47 The 1851 Census revealed that the mean age of women at marriage was 25 years. F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900*, Fontana Press, London, 1988, pp. 52-3. For other studies of spinsterhood, see Olive Banks, *Becoming a Feminist: The Social Origins of 'First Wave' Feminism*, Wheatsheaf Books, Sussex, 1986, Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies, Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930*, Pandora, London, 1985, Michael Anderson, 'The Social Position of Spinsters in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Journal of Family History*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1984. This is a Special Issue volume on 'Spinsterhood', and contains an extremely useful bibliography. See also, Rosemary Auchmuty, 'Victorian Spinsters', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, ANU, Canberra, 1975.

48 Rickards, from a letter from Dean Ramsay to Skene, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

49 M.N. Cutts has written on Hesba Stretton in her study, *Ministering Angels, A Study of Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Writing for Children*, Five Owls Press, U.K. 1979. Cutts has argued that '[n]o tract tale writer was better informed on her subject matter than Hesba Stretton, or was more closely in touch with current social problems', p. 133.

work of individuals such as Dr. Barnardo and Maria Rye who cared for and re-settled abandoned children, and campaigned for the retention of the Ragged Schools after the introduction of compulsory schooling in 1870 under the Education Act.⁵⁰ She willingly promoted the work of other philanthropists including the Reverend Benjamin Waugh and John 'Rob Roy' Macgregor and, later, her association with Benjamin Waugh resulted in the formation of the London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.⁵¹ She publicized the educational work of Dr. James Kay-Shuttleworth in providing humane care and instruction for "feeble-minded" children in the Royal Albert Asylum in Lancaster. In doing this, she criticized the lack of provision for mentally ill and handicapped children and adolescents:

For utterly helpless sufferers ... suffering for no sin of their own, the victims in a great degree of modern civilisation and modern vice, a rich nation like our own ought to provide State asylums into which every poor person would have a right to enter. But until the State provides such a shelter, Christian charity must go on building these palaces for God.⁵²

Her critical voice did not stop there. She wrote of her visits and the work of St. Giles' Christian mission which provided free food and shelter for discharged prisoners — she called it the Thieves' Kitchen — and implored readers of the *Sunday Magazine* to give financial support to London's missions.⁵³ She lent her name and pen to publicize the need for Children's Hospitals, and indicated her personal support for the Shadwell Children's Hospital and a small children's hospice in Limehouse. In a series of Congress Papers, she joined with others to write of women's work for children in institutions and schemes founded and run exclusively by women.⁵⁴ It is significant that she is still identified as an 'eminent' writer in 1893.⁵⁵

Hesba Stretton's name was also associated closely with The Friends of Russian Freedom—a group of Russian political exiles, including nihilists and anarchists. She

⁵⁰ Miss Stretton argued that street children were more likely to attend Ragged Schools since they were fed as well as schooled in these institutions. For broad discussion of the Ragged School Movement, see Kathleen Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action, An Appraisal of their Social Work*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1962, Chapter V.

⁵¹ Benjamin Waugh and John Macgregor, among other things, founded a day institution for the care of vagrant boys, the Wastepaper and Blacking Brigade. Benjamin Waugh was author of *The Gaol Crade: Who Rocks It?*, and editor of the *Sunday Magazine*. See *Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement, 1901-1911*, Oxford University Press, 1920, pp. 620-1, and *The Life of Benjamin Waugh* by Rosa Waugh, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1913.

⁵² Hesba Stretton, 'One of God's Palaces', An Appeal for the Royal Albert Asylum, reprinted from *Sunday Magazine*, Jan. 1885.

⁵³ Hesba Stretton, 'A Thieves' Supper', *Sunday Magazine*, Vol. 11, May, 1882, pp. 447-452.

⁵⁴ Hesba Stretton, 'Women's Work for Children, in *Woman's Mission: A Series of Congress Papers on the Philanthropic Work of Women by Eminent Writers*, (ed.), Baroness Burdett Coutts, Royal British Commission, Chicago Exhibition, 1893, pp. 4-12.

⁵⁵ Other writers in this series of Congress papers included Rosa Mulholland, [Lady Gilbert], Mrs Mary Molesworth, and Mrs Alexander [Annie Hector], all popular writers of the day.

attended Prince Peter Kropotkin's public lectures and with a new-found knowledge of Russia, she wrote a book about the persecution of Russian Stundists - *The Highway of Sorrow*. Later, in an odd collaboration with the anarchist, Serguis Stepniak who became a friend, she went on to write *The Hollow of His Hand*.⁵⁶ Her support was more than token; she started an appeal for the Russian Famine Fund and eventually collected nine hundred pounds. Aware of the importance of a name, she wrote using her name to ask Florence Nightingale, (who clearly was not willing to lend any practical assistance), to lend *her* name to the Famine appeal:

Dear Madam,

Pray forgive my writing to you again. But I do not want you to undertake any work; even if letters should be addressed to you they could be forwarded to me to answer. What I desire most earnestly is that you name might shew that you approve of the scheme - your name which is better known than any other name in all English [speaking] countries.⁵⁷

Confident of the pull of her own name, she advised Unwin's (the publishers) in 1890, that she still had enough influence to get support for the Free Russians; that under her name a memorial would be signed by 'a number of fashionable and influential women such as would be known by the Duchess of Edinburgh'.⁵⁸

Hesba Stretton's most public utterances were, however, reserved for use in the influential daily press. Without hesitation Hesba Stretton made her uncompromising opinions known on the subject of cruelty to children. On three occasions in 1884, and four in 1885, she wrote to the Editor of *The Times* about parental and institutional cruelty and each time, seeking financial and moral support, she advocated the work of the London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.⁵⁹ Aware that readers would instantly recognise her name from her books, she nevertheless adopted the customary mode of modest address:

⁵⁶ Hesba Stretton with ***** [Serguis Stepniak], *The Highway of Sorrow at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, Cassell & Company, 1891, Hesba Stretton, *In the Hollow of His Hand*, RTS, 1897.

⁵⁷ Hesba Stretton to Florence Nightingale, Nov. 6 1891, ALS, British Library, ADD 45811, folios 2-3.

⁵⁸ Hesba Stretton to Unwin, April 29, 1890. ALS, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, The University of Austin at Texas.

⁵⁹ Hesba Stretton to The Editor, *The Times*, Jan 8, May 26, June 30, 1884 - London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Hesba Stretton to The Editor, *The Times*, Jan. 6, Jan. 8, Jan. 10, Jan 13, 1885 - Hesba Stretton versus "Common Sense" regarding child abuse by an Anglican sister of charity in a children's home in Bristol. (The sister was fined ten shillings).

I am reluctant to trespass upon your indulgence, but I wish to state as briefly as possible two reasons why we want to form a new society for the prevention of cruelty to children in this already society-ridden London.⁶⁰

“We” in this instance referred to Baroness Angela Burdett-Coutts, one of England’s wealthiest (and philanthropic) women, and Miss Florence Davenport-Hill.

Religious Voices

As writers of semi-religious ‘problem novels’, Skene, Stretton and Tucker were able to channel their expertise, ideas, frustration and anger into what has been recognised by literary historian Elaine Showalter, as ‘an acceptable form of feminine and Christian expression’.⁶¹ Elisabeth Jay has also argued convincingly that Christian discourse pervaded much literature and was used through this medium to promulgate doctrine and practice.⁶² These literary proselytisers represented the overt characteristics of their religious community and faith but signalled much more than essential religious tenets and ideals; the writers took personal positions upon particular issues, right down to what they considered to be suitable modes of dress and demeanour, and acceptable “Christian” behaviour. As we shall see, illustrations played a vital role in portraying status and class; the illustrators of Hesba Stretton’s and Charlotte Maria Tucker’s books matched the writers’ evocative language with their own iconic figures.

The early works of Felicia Skene’s High Church fiction reflect far more than the ideals of the Oxford Movement; the writer’s experience of faith and works appear as do her prejudices and preferences. Descriptions of Holy Communion, priestly robes, auricular confession, holy sisterhoods, religious ecstasy, clerical saintliness, supernaturalism and impassioned religious enthusiasm are to be expected, but Skene also used words with precision to draw a flawless model of Christian womanhood. One assumes this echoes her own yearnings for perfection. In Skene’s first novel, *Use and Abuse*, the pristine heroine Ruth Vincent, presents this female ideal together with recognisable elements of a ‘High Church’ disposition. Clothed in sombre and modest dress without adornments, Ruth Vincent speaks with ‘a low voice, so full of deepest feeling’, and naturally ministers to all around her:

⁶⁰ Hesba Stretton to The Editor, *The Times*, June 30, 1884.

⁶¹ Elaine Showalter, *A Literature Of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, Virago, London, 1978, p. 28. Joseph Kestner has similarly recognised women ‘problem novelists’ in his study, *Protest and Reform: The British Social Narrative by Women 1827-1867*, Methuen & Co., London, 1985.

⁶² Jay, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

Ruth Vincent was not beautiful; hers was not a face to attract the eye at first glance, but none could have been more calculated to rivet the attention if once arrested; there was in her expression a purity, a repose, an air of abstraction from the world, that was very remarkable, added to a gravity and a thoughtfulness perhaps ill-suited to her years ... Yet it was not only the incontestable stamp of intellect—the impress of a noble and energetic mind—which gave to the face of Ruth Vincent so great a charm; but rather the extreme gentleness and softness, and, above all, the unfathomable tenderness that filled her eyes at all times; though most especially when they turned on any suffering being. Any one well versed in the human heart might have easily read on that countenance how hers was full of love to all mankind ...⁶³

Ruth Vincent steps aside from her own family and class in church to sit with the humblest and poorest of the congregation, indicating her independence as well as her Christ-like humility. Presumably, Miss Skene hoped that her impressive example of womanhood would inspire others to quickly follow.

Hesba Stretton, a dissenter by inclination and Congregationalist by faith, employed straightforward and unmistakable descriptions in her writing to indicate class and religious allegiances. Again, her descriptions of dress and demeanour play a vital role in conveying religious feeling and individual prejudice. Philanthropic gentlemen, particularly doctors, clerics and lawyers, are shown conventionally attired in tailored clothing. The minister's young daughters who befriend Jessica, the famous waif from Stretton's best-selling tale, *Jessica's First Prayer*, wear bows in their hair and plain yet fashionable dresses. The illustration is shown overleaf. Street urchins—central icons in Hesba Stretton's tales—are barefoot, unkempt and wear torn and ragged clothing.

Hesba Stretton's poignant evocations of familiar types were undoubtedly more important than illustrations — not all illustrators were capable of bringing accurate visual representations of fictional characters to the page— but Stretton's powers of description made her images lodge in the mind's eye. It was as if she were simply standing back and describing the scene to any bystander. It was a unique literary signature and importantly, it captured the religious overtones in her voice.

⁶³ *Use and Abuse, A Tale*, [Felicia Skene], Francis & John Rivington, London, 1849, p. 145.



Plate 1: *Jessica's First Prayer*. ⁶⁴

Languid young ladies with airs and graces and more than a whiff of Anglican lassitude were a breed of whom Hesba Stretton strongly disapproved. Mab, one such example, from Hesba Stretton's popular serial *David Lloyd's Last Will*, is carefully observed and disparagingly described:

A voice plaintive and low, with the affected accent which has been prevalent of late years among our young ladies ... made her appearance on the threshold. She was a small, fragile, slight creature, who looked as if the faintest breath of wind would waft her away. Her pale, straw-coloured hair was elaborately and fashionably arranged, and her dress was carefully made in the latest mode. The little white, dimpled hands which hung languidly down, had never been soiled by useful work of any kind, and were as soft as the tiny hands of a baby. ⁶⁵

Mrs Lloyd, an elderly woman from the same tale is drawn quite differently and immediately one senses Miss Stretton's approval. The woman sits in a plain and homely kitchen described in minute detail—from the blue and white crockery to the books on the home-made bookshelves: Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Grace Abounding*, a translation

⁶⁴ *Jessica's First Prayer*, Religious Tract Society, London, p. 57. This illustration comes from a book given as a gift to Amelia Evans from the Wesleyan Sunday School in 1878.

⁶⁵ Hesba Stretton, 'David Lloyd's Last Will', *The Leisure Hour*, Vol. 889, Jan. 9, 1869, p. 18.

of Madame Guyon's hymns, Wesley's *Christian Perfection*, and *The Imitation of Christ*. It is made clear that the woman is worthy and a God-fearing Methodist:

It was a woman of nearly seventy years of age, with bands of snow-white hair smoothed across a broad and scarcely wrinkled forehead. The dress of this person was scrupulously plain and simple, consisting of a coarse brown stuff gown, made of as little material as possible, a coarse but spotlessly white neck-handkerchief pinned at the throat, and a small mob-cap of white muslin, with no shred of lace or ribbon.⁶⁶

Charlotte Maria Tucker was similarly unambiguous in her treatment of class and status and used dress as an indicator with the sureness of one who understood the nuances of the Victorian social landscape. As we know, she was a serious Anglican evangelical and disapproved of frippery and false conduct. In one of her tales, *The Green Velvet Dress*, she refers to charity and the sin of envy, and deftly described the feelings of Jenny, a servant and the grateful recipient of a hand-me-down dress. Her words are matched by the illustrator's image in "The Message".

THE GREEN VELVET DRESS.



THE MESSAGE.

Plate 2. A.L.O.E., *Precepts in Practice, or, Illustrations of the Proverbs*.

Jenny utters: 'it must be a pleasure to even touch that lovely soft green velvet; and what must it be like to wear it! I could not fancy anyone's ever feeling unhappy wearing a dress like that'.⁶⁷ To modern readers the author's superimposed voice is patronizing, but she attempted to convey the feelings of this poor girl in language her audience would immediately understand and elicit sympathy.

In another popular tale, *Idols of the Heart*, Miss Tucker reveals the cruelty of two spoilt young girls who laugh at the quality of their new young step-mother's trousseau.⁶⁸ The step-daughters suggest she has 'employed school girls to run up her dresses, and make them [to a] true charity pattern', and they complain about her plain dresses: 'Why, there's not a flounce or fringe in the whole set, from the white silk dress to the neat cotton print'.⁶⁹ Miss Tucker exposes these sophisticated, un-Christian troublemakers and her own disdain for their behaviour, thus inviting the reader's condemnation.

Implicit within these narratives, Skene, Stretton and Tucker each conveyed concepts of status, class and religious observance, as well as a set of moral views. As individual voices they joined the pervasive streams of religious propaganda and added women's perspectives to current religious debates and interpretation. What is for certain is that as best-selling writers of semi-religious prose and fiction, they tapped directly into Victorian's religious and social sensibilities.

Feminist Voices

Reconciling elements of women's conservatism and models of femininity with expressions of diverse feminist interests has presented a challenging task for historians. Lesser known women like Skene, Stretton and Tucker who appear to have accepted the prevailing ideas of womanhood, compound this challenge. It would be anachronistic to expect Skene, Stretton or Tucker to have embraced any formalised feminist theory in public — they never thought of themselves as proto-feminists and have not been identified as such by twentieth century feminists. Florence Nightingale and Josephine Butler, the conservative philanthropic 'superstars',⁷⁰ and celebrated feminist heroines who fought high profile suffrage campaigns are easily identified, but how may historians judge who else had feminist interests at heart?

⁶⁷ Plate 3, "The Message", 'The Green Velvet Dress', *Precepts in Practice, or, Stories Illustrating the Proverbs*, A.L.O.E., T. Nelson & Sons, 1858, p. 103. [Illustrator's initials, E.F. unidentified]. This image is to represent the kindness of charity - note the servant's darned apron and worn boots, and the lady's plain but respectable dress.

⁶⁸ *Idols of the Heart, A Tale*, by A.L.O.E., T. Nelson & Sons, London, 1859.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁷⁰ Patricia Branca, *Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class Women in the Victorian Home*, Croom Helm, London, 1975, p. 6.

Barbara Caine and Philippa Levine have both faced this conundrum in recent studies of feminist lives in Victorian England.⁷¹ Caine remarked recently that it has been easier to bemoan the conservatism of mid-Victorian feminism because of the 'acceptance by [Victorian] feminists of certain prevailing ideas about the distinctive nature of womanhood'.⁷² Levine posed a series of pivotal questions concerning the recognition of feminist agency in the nineteenth century context, and asked in particular if a woman could be a feminist without knowing it, and if a Conservative [woman] could be a feminist? In seeking to broaden the definition of a "true" feminist, Levine drew upon Mary Maynard's concept of '*doing* rather than developing ideas'.⁷³ Consequently, she included 'women whose writings, declarations or action invoked a sense of gender as a concrete political category'.⁷⁴

In public and private, Skene, Stretton and Tucker fulfil Levine's criteria of women with feminist interests and answer her questions in the affirmative. They celebrated women's competence and needs in their fiction and other writing, and in their own lives. Their heroines embodied the strengths of womanhood and their philanthropic work focussed on women's well-being, though one notes this concern was always directed towards *other* women's interests. There is no evidence in their documents and letters to suggest that they felt directly oppressed although, like other dutiful daughters, they may have felt a sense of personal injustice at having received no formal education, unlike their brothers. Skene and Tucker relied heavily upon their elder brothers for advice but, in turn, they received respect for their intelligence and commitment.

By the mid-1860s, Skene, Stretton and Tucker had reached their middle years. Felicia Skene was forty-four, Hesba Stretton was thirty-six and Charlotte Tucker was forty-three. Each had experienced life as a dutiful daughter but had also become an established writer. It was only then, released from the responsibility of caring for ageing parents, that they were offered fresh starts in life. Age, if nothing else, endowed a certain respectability and it was only from this time onwards that they experienced real opportunities for careers as writers and philanthropists who could reap the benefits of independence.

⁷¹ Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, and Philippa Levine, *Feminist Lives in Victorian England: Private Roles and Public Commitment*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1990.

⁷² Caine, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁷³ Mary Maynard, 'Privilege and patriarchy: feminist thought in the nineteenth century', in Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall, (eds.), *Sexuality and Subordination. Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*, (1989), p. 225, cited in Levine, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁷⁴ Levine, *Feminist Lives*, pp. 4-5.

The writers recorded no fears of being left alone or of becoming "Old Maids" and maiden aunts. Felicia Skene was more than happy to accept this lot, as were Stretton and Tucker. Felicia Skene always welcomed her nieces and nephews, unlike her unmarried Oxford friend, Elizabeth M. Sewell, who eschewed becoming 'a useful aunt' since she believed 'aunts were put upon'.⁷⁵ Each woman derived spiritual strength from religious beliefs but drew nourishment from the domestic and familial love offered by siblings, nieces and nephews. Felicia Skene had the encouragement and moral support of her elder brother, William, and other family members, plus a wide circle which included her 'heretical' friend, Frances Power Cobbe,⁷⁶ as well as other single High Churchwomen, Sarah Angelina (Angie) Acland, Lady Sophia Palmer and Elizabeth Wordsworth of Oxford. Hesba Stretton had chosen to move away from her family and lived throughout her life with her sister, Elizabeth, but acted in *loco parentis* for her only brother's daughter, Alice and her sister Ann's son, Gilbert Bakewell Stretton, who eventually inherited much of her estate. Charlotte Maria Tucker looked after her brother Robert's children after his death (in the Indian Mutiny in 1857) and lived with her siblings' families acting as 'Maiden Aunt' to numerous nieces and nephews until her final departure for India in 1875.⁷⁷

Literary Voices

Of the three generations of Victorian authoresses identified by Elaine Showalter in her study of British women writers, these women, Skene, Stretton and Tucker, clearly belonged to the second 'feminine' generation which included 'the most conservative and devout women novelists'.⁷⁸ Charlotte M. Yonge, Dinah Craik, Elizabeth M. Sewell, Lady Georgiana Fullerton, Mrs. Oliphant and Jean Ingelow were amongst their literary cohorts.⁷⁹ In the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s, Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker were celebrated by readers and many critics as respected writers of semi-religious fiction. Despite cautious use of pseudonyms, they were acknowledged as serious and conscientious "literary ladies" and acted as mentors and models for other writers. Their literary contributions were well regarded right up until the end of the century by which time each writer was perhaps more renowned and respected for her

⁷⁵ *The Autobiography of Elizabeth M. Sewell*, Eleanor M. Sewell (ed.), London, 1907, p. 155. (As it transpired, Elizabeth M. Sewell became a devoted 'maiden aunt' to the nine children of two widowed brothers).

⁷⁶ Frances Power Cobbe wrote extensively on the subject of women's oppression and on the problems suffered by wives. Her definitive article upon the subject was entitled 'Wife Torture in England', *Contemporary Review*, 32, 1878.

⁷⁷ See 'The Robins' in Charlotte Maria Tucker's family tree in *Appendix*, under Authors' Genealogies.

⁷⁸ Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, p. 19.

⁷⁹ Showalter provides a useful biographical index of women writers. *N.B.* Charlotte Maria Tucker's date of birth is 1821, not 1825 as stated in this index. *Ibid.*, p. 328.

'useful' spinsterhood and philanthropy than for literary achievement. Skene, Stretton and Tucker had established themselves as writers, as philanthropists, and as independent women in a society which continued to regard spinsterhood as either a pitiable or a suspicious condition.

Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker were often placed in an equivocal position in literary society, as in society at large. As unmarried women their status was ambiguous and as spinster-writers they carried a further burden, enduring what Elaine Showalter has called the 'double critical standard'.⁸⁰ Whilst some critical observers were prepared to admit that female authorship had advanced, others, for rhetorical, artistic and sometimes purely personal reasons, continued to appeal to the 'prejudices of the olden times, when a lady's business with literature was limited to her prayer book'.⁸¹ The *Dublin Review* candidly admitted that, notwithstanding the extraordinary advances made within the "sisterhood of letters", judgments continued to be made on the basis of an author's sex.⁸² The belief in the general inferiority of the female sex persisted to such an extent that, when admiring a woman's work of fiction, many critics persisted in uttering 'half-wondering, half-patronizing declarations'. Reportedly, the highest compliment for a woman's book was either that it was judged mistakenly as a man's, or that it was acknowledged as "an extraordinary work for a woman!" The *Dublin Review* concluded that critics' 'half instinctive prejudices [were] most difficult to combat'.⁸³

All three writers have been incorporated into generalised stereotypes at some time by contemporaries, obituarists and historians. Prevailing perceptions of spinster-writer-philanthropists indelibly stained perceptions at the time, and evidence suggests that these writers were neither deaf to criticism nor blind to spiteful stereotypes. Hesba Stretton recorded in 1860 that she and her sister Elizabeth had gone to a party in their home town of Wellington where they were 'regarded as natural curiosities in the animal kingdom'. 'Natural curiosities' was Miss Stretton's euphemistic expression for spinster.⁸⁴ Charlotte Maria Tucker incorporated a 'typical' spinster figure into one of her most popular novels, *Idols of the Heart*, published in 1859. She described "Miss Mildmay" as 'a sallow lady on the shady side of forty ... a mild, inanimate sample of gentility ... whose prim pursed

80 Showalter, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

81 Unsigned article, 'Our Lady Novelists', *Dublin Review*, Vol. XXIII, Sept. 1847, p. 290.

82 The anonymous author of 'Our Lady Novelists', wrote: 'There are few, even still, who can bring themselves to judge an authoress by the same standard which is applied to an author; and even the most admiring critic, in expressing his approval of the production of a female pen, will almost insensibly mix up with his judgment of the individual some unconscious depreciation of the intellectual powers of the sex'. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-9.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 179.

84 *Log Book*, 19 Dec. 1860.

lips rarely unclosed to speak, and still more rarely to smile'.⁸⁵ Was this figure written with tongue ironically in cheek, or a stereotype absorbed from fiction, or simply drawn from personal observation? The humourless "Miss Mildmay" is dismissed as 'one of the dead-weights of society'. Charlotte Tucker was at the time only just on the right side of forty!

Historians have combed contemporary Victorian sources for writing on the 'Woman Question' and the 'spinster problem' and have exposed strong stereotypical views of Victorian womanhood. Patricia Hollis extracted three main bodies of ideas in her study of the nascent women's movement. The first strong stereotype was religious and emphasised women's dependency upon men and her 'God-given weakness'. The second was socio-political, decreeing that if a woman remained unmarried she had 'failed' to create a family which was primarily 'woman's business'. The third was a biological stereotype which drew upon medical theories and new science. Unmarried women were seen as rejecting their biological destinies and were referred to as 'barren spinsters'. Women who refused to marry were seen by some to threaten the very existence of the human race by their refusal to reproduce.⁸⁶ A comparative study on the debates surrounding the 'Woman Question' in Britain and America found other categories of womanhood — 'the Angel in the House based upon Coventry Patmore's celebration of perfect womanhood, the Angel out of the House based upon a Florence Nightingale-type with a beneficial [philanthropic] mission, the non-angelic "strong-minded" woman, and the "apocalyptic" feminist.'⁸⁷

Philanthropic Voices

If a taxonomy of spinsterhood existed, it would include such categories as spinster novelists, singular anomalies, literary ladies, meddlesome Lady Bountiful's, *grandes dames* of charity and 'lady guerillas of philanthropy'.⁸⁸ These were some of the invidious descriptions in circulation. Such discriminatory portraits of Victorian women are ubiquitous, indelible images which served to muffle and distort women's lives. And as with all stereotypes, when individual details are elicited and restored, counter-images

⁸⁵ *Idols of the Heart: A Tale*, by A.L.O.E., Thomas Nelson & Son, 1859, p. 76.

⁸⁶ Patricia Hollis, *Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850-1900*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1979, pp. 3-4. One example she cites is Grant Allen, a novelist, who wrote in 1889, that 'most women must be wives and mothers ... we will not aid or abet women as a sex in rebelling against maternity'. *Ibid*, p. 30.

⁸⁷ Elizabeth K. Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets & William Veeder, *The Woman Question: Society and literature in Britain and America, 1837-1883*. (Vol 1) *Defining Voices*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989.

⁸⁸ This description is attributed to Frances Power Cobbe. Pauline Nestor, *Female Friendships and Communities, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1985, p. 21.

emerge which challenge and illuminate the hidden corners of lost lives. The sources of such labels are mixed but many were taken directly from fiction, particularly from Charles Dickens' fictional parodies of philanthropic spinsters.⁸⁹ Though composites, they are images replete with insidious meanings.

Josephine Butler, a contemporary of these writers and a reform activist who fought for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, suffered from criticism for her philanthropic work amongst prostitutes, some of which reflected deep animosity held towards spinsters. Though married to Reverend George Butler who was entirely supportive of her cause, she endured the patronizing assumptions made of unmarried philanthropic women. She noted in 1869 that the 'fervent advocates of woman's cause', were often accused of being 'pinched or starved in the matter of affection, disappointed in life, embittered by isolation'. They were, in other words, embittered spinsters. Paradoxically, whilst a silent majority in the community might have agreed that the social benefits accrued through women's active benevolence and philanthropy was immense, a vocal minority also commanded attention.

Women's philanthropy was regarded by many in the community as a worthy 'womanly' pursuit, so long as the women involved remained 'amateurs'.⁹⁰ Others — often articulate and well published — regarded the entire philanthropic endeavour and the exercise of charity as a sentimental and ineffective pursuit. At its sentimental worst, it was seen as a pernicious waste of money. Thomas Carlyle and J.S. Mill, regarded philanthropy as a weakening and ultimately an impoverishing apparatus invented to salve the conscience of the rich while ruining the moral fibre of the poor. According to Mill, any will of the poor to survive independently was often in danger of being destroyed by the 'pet projects' of great men and indiscriminate, untrained and sentimental, female philanthropists.⁹¹ Ironically, though a philanthropist herself, Felicia Skene shared some element of this, warning in 1867, of the well-intentioned meddling of amateurs in an article entitled, 'The Blunderer; or, How The Work of the Rich is Marred Among the Poor'. She noted that 'well-meaning advisers of the poor so habitually defeat their own object by patronising and fault-finding, [they] create a secret antagonism where most they

⁸⁹ Charles Dickens excelled in caricature. Two notable examples in literature of over-zealous married philanthropic women are provided in the figures of Mrs Jellyby and Mrs Pardiggle from *Bleak House*. For unmarried women, see 'The Ladies Societies', in *Sketches by Boz*, (1836).

⁹⁰ Mrs Sarah Ellis, for example, suggested in 1869 that 'a lady may do almost anything from motives of charity or zeal ... but so soon as a woman begins to receive money, ... the heroine is transformed into a tradeswoman'. Mrs Ellis, *Education of the Heart: woman's best work*, London, 1869, p. 14, cited in Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p. 6

⁹¹ J.S. Mill, 'The Claims of Labour', *Edinburgh Review*, LXXXI, April, 1845, p. 525.

desire to inspire confidence'. In this sage piece written, one suspects, from long experience in the field, she eluded the question of gender, referring only to 'persons'.⁹²

Labels, even applied innocently, can often become pejorative. Rather than choosing to describe certain women as 'active socially aware single women', (an enlightened description adopted by Patricia Hollis to describe unmarried women with common philanthropic interests),⁹³ Hesba Stretton has been described by Elaine Showalter in her study of literary women simply as 'a children's religious novelist ... interested in London S.P.C.C. ... [who] remained single'. Felicia Skene is identified as 'another unmarried Anglican novelist ... [who] turned to nursing and social work'. Charlotte Maria Tucker is described as a 'a children's religious book writer ... [who] remained single, [and] became a missionary'.⁹⁴ These descriptions, highlighting each woman's unmarried status, pigeonholes and diminishes them. According to this prescription, without alternative offers of marriage, each one 'settles' for spinsterhood. Robert Lee Wolff, for example, states that Felicia Mary Frances Skene 'settled down to many decades of High-Anglican spinsterhood and novel writing'.⁹⁵ These writers 'turn' to philanthropic work, not as a result of personal mission or personal choice, but as a result of starved affections and disappointments in life and love. However, what some contemporaries choose to view as barren spinsterhood, the writers themselves saw as a blessing. Their philanthropic work always preceded and eventually deliberately precluded marriage.

Skene, Stretton and Tucker do not fit such stereotypes. They were philanthropists but they could not be accurately described as nineteenth-century *grandes dames* of charity — their financial resources were too limited — and as writers they used their pens to great effect. Their wills show that their final endowments to charities were modest. Hesba Stretton left her entire estate to her nieces and nephews. Felicia Skene left a small sum to the Oxford House of Refuge to accommodate girls awaiting admission to home or penitentiaries.⁹⁶ She left money to the Oxford Eye Hospital, (a legacy of her long friendship with Sir Henry Acland), to Sir Henry Burdett, the hospital reformer and

⁹² F.M.F. Skene, 'The Blunderer; or, How the work of the Rich is Marred Among the Poor, *Good Words*, April 1, 1867, pp. 256-260.

⁹³ Patricia Hollis, *Women in Public 1850-1900, Documents of the Victorian Women's Movement*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1979, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁴ Showalter, *op. cit.*, p. 332, p. 147, p. 328.

⁹⁵ Robert Lee Wolff, *Gain and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England*, Garland Publishing, New York, p. 148.

⁹⁶ The Oxford House of Refuge was founded in 1873 and was originally run by the Oxford Moral Welfare Association. Felicia Skene was actively involved with this Association through her prison visiting and pastoral work. It was later renamed the Skene Welfare Association. Records of the Association are now held in the Oxfordshire Archives, Accession Number 3456. See also, *Victoria County History of Oxford: The City*, Institute of Historical Research, London, 1979, p. 363.

editor of *The Hospital*, a journal for which she had written, and to St. Thomas's Orphanage run by the Sisterhood Mercy of the Holy and Undivided Trinity whose establishment she had actively supported in 1851. She also left money to St. Edward's School at which she had taught voluntarily. Charlotte Maria Tucker left her house in Batala to the Church of England Zenana Mission.⁹⁷ Though less easy to attribute, much larger financial contributions were made over many years by pleading and working for particular philanthropic causes and by insisting that publishers put out cheaper and cheaper editions of their books to improve accessibility. By utilising the vehicle of fiction, these writers played an active and generous role in the mass endeavours of philanthropic publishing. By diverting royalties back into publication, the writers and their publishers joined forces to subsidise the production and distribution of cheap books.

As part of a well-identified group, literary spinsters had to endure barbs aimed by women whom one might have expected to have better understood. For instance, Geraldine Jewsbury, an accomplished writer and critic who remained unmarried and concerned herself with the 'Woman Question', chose to isolate spinsters in her fiction and portray them as poor, dreary creatures.⁹⁸ Jewsbury insisted that the true feminine disposition was passive and receptive (and modest perhaps?), and suggested that when women were active and 'heroic', they approached the masculine nature.⁹⁹ Harriet Taylor Mill aimed at the heart of the literary class of English women who, she alleged, 'disclaim[ed] the desire for equality and citizenship' and enrolled themselves in a 'sentimental priesthood', setting themselves apart from other women, adding:

Successful literary women are just as unlikely to prefer the cause of women to their own social consideration.¹⁰⁰

Clearly, Jewsbury had little sympathy for spinsters, and Harriet Taylor Mill had not understood the activities and writings of women like Skene, Tucker and Stretton and she had died before they reached their peak as writers.¹⁰¹ Had she met them, she might have conceded that they were strong-minded women. Though silent in public about women's electoral suffrage, they tackled in fiction and prose pressing issues which affected 'other' women, such as the incidence of domestic abuse and prostitution. Taylor Mill's criticism

⁹⁷ See Illustration, *Charlotte Maria Tucker: An Accidental Feminist*, this thesis.

⁹⁸ Geraldine Jewsbury, *The Half Sisters, A Tale*, 2 vols. London, 1848.

⁹⁹ Mrs. Alexander Ireland (ed.), *Selections from the Letters of Geraldine Endor Jewsbury to Jane Welsh Carlyle*, (London), 1892, Vol. III, p. 43, cited in Shirley Foster, *Victorian Women's Fiction: Marriage Freedom and the Individual*, Croom Helm, Beckenham, Kent, 1986, p. 31.

¹⁰⁰ Unsigned, [Harriet Taylor Mill], 'Enfranchisement of Women', *Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review*, LV, July 1851, pp. 289-311. These extracts are found in the last pages of text reprinted in John M. Robson (ed.), *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Essays on Equality, Law, and Education*, Vol. XXI, Routledge & Kegan Paul, University of Toronto Press, 1984, pp. 414-5.

¹⁰¹ Harriet Taylor Mill died in 1858. John Stuart Mill republished her work as a tribute in *Dissertations and Discussions*, 2 vols. Parker, London, 1859.

could have been wounding. Yet these writers of semi-religious fiction, in other circumstances, might have been quietly pleased to be described as part of a 'sentimental priesthood'. Playing on sentiment and sensibilities was, of course, the writers' forté and intention.

Modest Voices

A low voice and soft address are the common indications of a well-bred woman. [Hannah More, *True and False Meekness*, 1777].

It is very likely that Skene, Stretton and Tucker were familiar with Hannah More's injunction.¹⁰² More's fiction and prose writings, and Mrs Sarah Ellis's guides for the women, daughters, and wives of England, were influential works in and beyond evangelical and High Church circles.¹⁰³ Both stressed the need for women's quiet voices and modest demeanour. "Well-bred" mid-Victorian women absorbed the injunction. Admittedly, modesty was supposedly a feminine trait and a subduing convention but, in the right hands, it could serve useful public purposes, particularly for women involved in writing and philanthropy.

Skene, Stretton and Tucker and other contemporary writers such the High Church Anglicans, Charlotte M. Yonge and Christina Rossetti, all observed the customs of modesty and self-effacement.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, they used their skills to great advantage. A "modest" woman who declared her humble and earnest aspirations in print subtly drew attention to her purpose, covertly subverting modesty's original function. Acting and speaking modestly was said to protect a woman from the intrusive public gaze and preserve her natural virtue, and in the mid-1850s, modesty was still considered to be an instinctive and "in-bred" sense peculiar to women. This legacy emanated from popular eighteenth century conduct books, novels of sensibility and philosophers such as Rousseau and Hume from where it found its way into influential nineteenth century etiquette manuals.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Hannah More, *Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies*, London, 1777.

¹⁰³ Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Women of England: Their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits*, 1839, *The Wives of England*, 1843, *The Daughters of England*, 1845.

¹⁰⁴ According to her latest biographer, the poet Christina Rossetti was one modest contemporary who denounced vanity, loathed self-display and accepted Mrs Felicia Heman's poetic advice to resist the allure of [F]ame. Jan Marsh, *Christina Rossetti: a literary biography*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1994, p. 71. Charlotte M. Yonge committed her thoughts on modesty in a series entitled 'Womankind' which appeared in the *Monthly Packet* between 1874 to 1877. Traditional womanly graces thus included humility, meekness, gentleness and modesty. Miss Yonge edited the *Monthly Packet* between 1851 and 1890.

¹⁰⁵ Ruth Bernard Yeazell has provided scholars with a brilliant literary and historical discussion of the uses of modesty. Although Yeazell's study focuses primarily upon sexual interpretations of the use of modesty in fiction, she also provides an excellent analysis of modest mores,

Felicia Skene had consummate skills in this sphere. Having devoted the best part of her career to writing for the public, when asked to write her autobiography about her philanthropic works and the celebrities she had known, she refused. She told her publisher John Blackwood, that writing her autobiography was an impossibility — modesty forbade parading such “unladylike” details. She wrote, ‘it would seem to me such an ostentatious proceeding ... I could not bring myself to detail my own occupations’.¹⁰⁶ Readers had to content themselves by reading between the lines she had already written. Later, she relented, but only to the extent that she produced two articles on those whom she had known.¹⁰⁷ In various ways, Felicia Skene *had* told the public about the extent of her philanthropic work, but in a suitably modest fashion. Nevertheless, Skene’s observance of the convention of modesty (which included the use of pseudonyms), changed subtly over the passage of time. Descriptions of her early experiences visiting penitentiaries and reformatories in 1865, were published anonymously. In 1889 writing under the pen-name of ‘Francis Scougal’, (note the masculine spelling), in the Introduction to *Scenes From A Silent World*, her readers were reminded that the writer drew directly from personal experience of prisoners, prison and punishment.¹⁰⁸ Later in 1896, writing for *The Hospital*, she referred openly to her experience as a prison visitor and this time used her real name, “F.M.F. Skene”. Modesty was immodestly abandoned and the reading public informed of her work but, despite promptings from influential men, no autobiography ever appeared.

Hesba Stretton was similarly guarded about her writing and refused all but one interview.¹⁰⁹ She hesitated long before agreeing to have her photograph taken, and this was only on the insistence of publishers.¹¹⁰ Like her contemporaries, she objected to putting herself before the public in a “showy” way and was recognised rarely in public.

conventions and consciousness. I have referred particularly to ideas in Chapter 1, The Language of Modesty and Chapter 2, Nature and Convention. *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991.

¹⁰⁶ Skene to Blackwood, 30 Aug. 1897, MS 4666, folios 193-3, *Blackwood Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

¹⁰⁷ Felicia Skene, writing as F.M.F. Skene, produced two interesting articles for Blackwood. In 1895, she wrote ‘Glimpses of Some Vanished Celebrities’, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, July 1895, pp. 1-15, (the leading article), and ‘Some Episodes in a Long Life’, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, June, 1896, pp. 828-850. These are dealt with in more detail in Chapter II, Felicia Skene (1821-1899) - Sensational Maiden.

¹⁰⁸ *Scenes from a Silent World* was published in an eight-part series in *Blackwood’s Magazine*. It was brought out later as a volume with an Introduction and a new chapter of capital punishment as *Scenes from a Silent World, or, Prisons and Their Inmates* by Francis Scougal in 1889. It was an extremely popular series, but Blackwood’s lost money on it in book form. See, letter, Blackwood to Skene, MS 30377, Correspondence Book, p. 8, Sept. 20, 1889 and Skene to Blackwood, MS 4579, Feb. 11, 1891, folio 267, *Blackwood’s Archives*.

¹⁰⁹ This interview is discussed in Chapter III, Hesba Stretton (1832-1911) - Shropshire Lass.

¹¹⁰ Publishers, Horne and Hartshorne, wrote to her a number of times requesting her photograph to appear in *The Lady’s Own Paper*. She refused on each occasion. *Log Book*, Feb. 24, 1868.

She declared that she and her sister Lizzie 'were not fitted for society'.¹¹¹ Not that she was a recluse — far from it; her diaries record attendance at social gatherings, church sermons, public meetings, private parties and visiting her publishers, but she refused to be 'seen' for a cause although, as we know, she was 'heard' through her writings. When driven to action she did not hesitate to use her well-known name to publicize the childrens' cause in the daily newspapers, but only for this would she throw modesty to the wind.

"A Lady of England" - A.L.O.E.- Charlotte Maria Tucker, remained still deeper behind her veil of modesty throughout her life and used her distinctive pseudonym to shield herself and promote an exemplary ideal of shining English womanhood. Nothing that she wrote was allowed to detract from the highest ideals of womanhood nor to draw attention to herself. Miss Tucker had no need to promote herself since her books were so numerous that she was, whether she or not liked it, a household name in evangelical circles and far beyond. Indeed, she was acknowledged openly in England and India; some described her as "Miss Tucker, better known as A.L.O.E.", "Miss Tucker, so well known as A.L.O.E." or "Charlotte Tucker, better known as A.L.O.E.". Toru Dutt, an Indian admirer, Christian convert and aspiring writer who had received an encouraging letter from Miss Tucker in 1876, called her 'The Soul of India'.¹¹² Her work with the Church of England Missionary Society in the Zenana movement was widely publicized while she remained modestly writing in the foothills of the Himalayas, well aware that her name and pseudonym was used by others to inspire Christian women to missionary service.¹¹³

The modest published voice thus became an effective and well-established means of projecting these women's views to the public. Skene, Stretton and Tucker became experts at using modesty as a tool when speaking directly, in prose narratives, and in

¹¹¹ *Log Book*, April 23, 1867.

¹¹² Harihar Das, *The Life and Letters of Toru Dutt*, Oxford University Press, 1921, p. 193.

¹¹³ Apart from fiction, Miss Tucker wrote articles for *The Quiver*, the *Church Missionary Gleaner* and the *Indian Female Evangelist*.

semi-religious fiction. Not unexpectedly, female characters who appeared in their semi-religious fiction reflected the omnipresent view that womanly modesty was a virtue; female heroines all displayed the signs—humility, self-effacement, refusal of praise. Yet, the prayers and soliloquies of such female characters indicated a strength of purpose and determination which paradoxically defied modest aspirations. In fiction, these writers called upon a new definition which declared modesty a strength, not a submissive weakness. The humble declarations of an idealistic woman were used simultaneously to subvert notions of inferiority while conforming outwardly to a vocabulary of modest convention. By eloquently refusing to “put oneself forward” or publicly acknowledge successful contributions to a particular philanthropic cause, a powerful and telling point could be made.

The oppressive Victorian injunction, “suffer and be still”, was eschewed by these writers; they neither suffered nor were they still. Skene's, Stretton's and Tucker's voices and opinions entered the public discourse as decisively as the philanthropic measures they proposed. Reading from platforms of fiction and prose, and through personal diaries and letters, we see not only the ways these conservative women viewed themselves and other humans in distress, but also the motivations and justifications underpinning their surprisingly radical and reforming views.

Chapter II

Felicia Mary Frances Skene - Sensational Maiden - (1821-1899)

I think that the motive power of my life is one of towering ambition which may best be described by the words I have taken for my motto — “Beati immaculati!” ... I have always mentally lived alone—alone I have thought and dreamt, and hoped and feared, and I learned early that I must find the true religion for myself, if such there were in heaven and earth.¹

Felicia Skene wrote this impassioned votive to give voice to “Vera Stafford”, the pristine, fictional heroine of her novel of religious faith and doubt, *Through the Shadows: A Test of the Truth*. Vera Stafford was fashioned by her creator as the perfect vision of Victorian youth, truth and spiritual beauty; her confession was uttered in the moonlit setting of the Acropolis in a moment of truth.

The author, sheltering behind one of her pseudonyms, had provided her unsuspecting readers with a truthful summation of her own life and personal philosophy. It was in 1888, at the age of sixty seven, that Felicia Skene wrote this novel. Significantly, it was her last work of fiction. Only two publications appeared after this, *Scenes from a Silent World, or Prisoners and their Inmates*, published under the name of ‘Francis Scougal’, regarded by the author as ‘a work of real experience’,² and *A Test of the Truth: An Argument for Immortality* written under the name of Oxoniensis, a theological attack on atheism and modern scepticism.³

Felicia Mary Frances Skene, together with her books, is offered as a representative of the ‘chroniclers of conscience’, a group of women authors who devoted themselves to writing about and performing what Victorians called “good works”.⁴ Here, I examine her life and family, the internal and external influences of daily experience, her publishers, and the friends and mentors with whom she lived and

¹ *Through the Shadows: A Test of the Truth*, by Erskine Moir [Felicia Mary Frances Skene], Elliot Stock, London, 1888, pp. 62-3. “Beati immaculati” translates literally to mean “Blessed are the Undeiled”. “Vera” was the diminutive form of “Veritas”, the heroine’s name.

² *Scenes from a Silent World or Prisons and Their Inmates* by Francis Scougal [Felicia Mary Frances Skene], William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh & London, 1889, p. ix. (A reprint has appeared in the Garland Series, *Crime and Punishment in England 1850-1922*, edited by Martin J Wiener, Garland Publishing, Inc. New York & London, 1984.)

³ Oxoniensis, [Felicia Mary Frances Skene], *A Test of the Truth: An Argument for Immortality*, Elliot Stock, London, 1897.

⁴ Margaret Maison has grouped Felicia Skene with other ‘chroniclers of conscience’, Charlotte M. Yonge and Elizabeth M. Sewell, labelling them ‘Tractarian spinsters.’ *Search Your Soul Eustace: A Survey of The Religious Novel in the Victorian Age*, Sheed & Ward, London, 1961, pp. 48-54.

worked. Critics and admirers have labelled Felicia Skene a Tractarian writer — one literary historian suggested that she was ‘an amateur at writing fiction’⁵ — but Skene was far more professional and adventurous than this ^{description} indicates. She began by writing devotional works and semi-religious novels, but once clear of an overbearing influence, leapt over the conventional wall of Tractarianism. She then turned to writing for a variety of popular journals while performing a range of philanthropic tasks well beyond the confines of home. Contemporaries recognised Skene as a specialist writer of religious fiction and a philanthropist with specific areas of expert knowledge; for us she also displays many of the intangible traits and tensions associated with single women of her generation.

Felicia Skene can be seen both as an independent, conscientious member of an informal, yet influential, social and religious movement, embracing common, conservative aims, and as a dutiful daughter. While stoutly upholding Conservative aims and conforming largely to Victorian society’s unwritten social conventions, she did not consider herself to be a victim of oppressive patriarchy.⁶ Rather, she regarded herself as an independent moral being. Like her friend and confidante, Frances Power Cobbe, Skene believed in the actual communion with the soul of the Divine, though unlike her friend who moved away from orthodox Christianity to embrace Theism and new social sciences, Felicia Skene remained faithful to her Church. Ironically, it was Felicia Skene who recommended to Cobbe that she read Kant’s *Metaphysic of Ethics*, a treatise which Cobbe found ‘dazzlingly enlightening’.⁷

Until the last days of her life, Skene, too, was concerned with ethics, but the religious doubts of others were of greater concern. Her last piece of writing, *A Test of the Truth*, dealt with the psychological damage that resulted from intellectuals’ untested

⁵ Robert Lee Wolff, *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England*, Garland Publishing, New York, 1977, p. 148.

⁶ For a challenging analysis of patriarchy, see Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace’s study, *Her Father’s Daughter. Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth and Patriarchal Complicity*, Oxford University Press, 1991. Kowaleski-Wallace argues that Hannah More, the evangelical writer of an earlier generation considered herself to be free of patriarchal control. Wallace, however, points to More’s female complicity in perpetuating patriarchal class operations, *ibid.*, pp. 56-93.

⁷ At the age of nearly thirty, Cobbe was very ill and had contemplated religion, morality and the immortality. She wrote, ‘As it happened at this very time, my good (orthodox) friend, Miss Felicia Skene, had recommended me to read Kant’s *Metaphysics of Ethics*, and I had procured Semple’s translation and found it almost dazzlingly enlightening to my mind’. *Life of Frances Power Cobbe by Herself*, Volume 1, Richard Bentley & Son, London, 1894, pp. 109-110. Cobbe was reading widely before she began writing her *Essay on the Theory of Intuitive Morals*. Felicia Skene’s interest in Kant’s rational philosophy is puzzling. Presumably she was interested in his concepts of Moral Progress and Duty which he separated from supernatural revelation. Her reading, therefore, was possibly in recognition of, and to provide a corrective to, any sentimental tendency or selfish desire to ‘do good’.

and secular teachings, as well as with individuals' consequent loss of faith in the Christian belief in immortality. She wrote:

All who share to any intent in the intellectual life of the present day, must come more or less under the portentous shadow by which modern Scepticism has darkened the whole world of thought. ... There are for many whom the entire negation of belief in a self-existent Power behind the material universe—in the survival of human consciousness after death—and in any possible solution, here or hereafter, of the mysteries of earthly existence, becomes nothing less than the very blackness of despair; since it extinguishes for them the last gleam of light that could illumine the ocean of suffering and evil in every form, that floods the earth from pole to pole.⁸

Skene's diaries and manuscripts have long since disappeared, but a number of her letters remain, as do many of her books and writings. Collectively, these perform several important functions. First, reading between the lines, the published works and unpublished letters provide insights into an inner life and personal philosophy. Second, her works disclose important autobiographical references as well as many pertinent observations and social commentaries of a well-informed, upper middle-class, conservative woman of the mid-Victorian era. And, finally, her fiction was often sensational and controversial—surprising from so maidenly a lady.

Family Connections

Felicia Mary Frances Skene was born in the soft airs of Aix-en-Provence in southern France on 23 May 1821. She was named after her godmother, a French Comtesse Felicité,⁹ and retained links with France for the rest of her life. Felicia was the youngest child born into a Scottish family of great antiquity.¹⁰ Her father was James Skene of Rubislaw (1775-1864) whose family, the Skenes of Aberdeenshire, had obtained the crown charter of the barony of Skene from King Robert I. Her mother, Jane Forbes (1787-1862), was the daughter of Sir William Forbes, heir of the famous Jacobite, Lord Pitsligo and Monymusk.¹¹ Both families remained loyal in heart and memory to the Scottish monarchs, although they pledged allegiance to the English crown. William Forbes Skene, Felicia's elder brother, a writer to the signet and patriotic Scottish historian and antiquarian, documented the family's illustrious history.¹²

⁸ Oxoniensis, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁹ E.C. Rickards, *Felicia Skene at Oxford;: A Memoir*, John Murray, London, 1902, p. 1.

¹⁰ The Skenes' can be traced back to 1317. Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, *The Tartans of the Clans and Families of Scotland*, Johnston & Bacon, Edinburgh & London, 1971 (8th ed.), p. 279.

¹¹ See Skene's Genealogical Table in Appendix.

¹² William Forbes Skene (1809-1892), Felicia's elder brother, was appointed Historiographer Royal for Scotland in 1881. As Writer to the Signet, he reached the top of his profession as a solicitor. He was a Celtic scholar and documented many Scottish Highland myths and published a number of

The family of the Skenes of Rubislaw consisted of three sons and four daughters. The eldest child, George, was born in 1807, William in 1809 and James in 1812. The daughters followed; Jane Helen was born 1813 and died in early youth, Catherine was born in 1815, Caroline was born in 1818, and Felicia Mary Frances, born in 1821, was the youngest child and beloved daughter of her father. Before she was born, James Skene had taken his family to live in France to enjoy a warmer climate because his wife had suffered from recurrent illness in Edinburgh. As a young man before marriage, Skene had taken the usual Grand Tour and was familiar with favourable locations in France and Italy. He was well-educated having received his formal and formative schooling in Germany. He must have judged Aix-en-Provence to be a relatively inexpensive and congenial place to bring up a young family, with the added benefits of a cultured community of ex-patriots. By training a lawyer, James Skene was also a life-long friend of the writer, Sir Walter Scott. who described him as the best amateur draftsman in Scotland. It seems that Scott was inspired to commence the Waverley novels after having viewed his friend's sketches in a series of illustrated diaries.¹³ The friendship^{is referred to} in the Dedicatory Epistle to *Ivanhoe*.¹⁴ This relationship proved to be an important influence upon Felicia's literary imagination and in one article written in 1898 for the *Argosy*, she fondly recalled her childhood conversations with Scott.¹⁵

In 1827 when Felicia was six, the Skenes' moved to Paris. There the boys received a formal education and, like their father, they went on to complete their studies in Germany. Felicia and her sisters were educated primarily by governesses, but for a short time she attended a day school 'of the highest class' when the family moved to Versailles. With other boys and girls—the children of gentlemen—they were instructed by a 'vivacious elderly lady, Mademoiselle Henriette' who, according to Felicia's recollections, 'came down upon them for any breach of politeness or good manners'. There was little rudimentary education at Mademoiselle's *petite école*; much later in life Skene recalled that 'the varied list of attainments supposed to be taught in the school, geography, arithmetic, etc.,' never seemed to come her way, but this mattered little since she could already read and write in French and English. With her English governess, plus books from her father's library, she filled in any gaps in her general knowledge. Years later, Skene admitted that the 'primitive school was instrumental in conveying to the foreign pupils a familiarity with the French language which could not have been

scholarly works. He was also a philanthropist and churchman. He remained unmarried. See entry, *Dictionary of National Biography*. Vol. XVIII, Oxford University Press, 1917, pp. 338-340.

13 Skene's sketches were published in 1829 as *A Series of Sketches of the Existing Localities Alluded to in the Waverley Novels*. The originals are lodged in the National Library of Scotland.

14 See, James Skene, *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 335-356.

15 F.M.F. Skene, 'A Noble Life', *The Argosy*, Jan. 1898.

acquired by years of systematic study'.¹⁶ Her facility with languages remained throughout life; she was fluent in French and modern Greek and spoke some Italian and German. She could also read and translate classical Greek. This, allied with her insights and an understanding of Continental culture and social life foreign to many of her more xenophobic compatriots, set her apart from many other women and men of her generation.

As with many girls of her class and gentility, Felicia was instructed in the fine arts, singing and piano, painting and sketching. She developed a love of music and inherited her father's talent for sketching. Her piano studies were developed with singing and she and her sister, Caroline, received piano lessons from 'a wild-looking, long-haired, excited man, whose patience was not proof against the girls' blunders'.¹⁷ That man was Franz Joseph Liszt. His opinion of her abilities as a pianist were evidently not high, and she concentrated instead on improving her voice. Later, in Greece, she received training from the maestro of the Opera in Athens and attended many operas with her father, sometimes as many as three performances a week. Music became an absorbing delight and opera allowed brief encounters with dramatic music and far-fetched and romantic plots. Evidently her voice was good. One clergyman who knew her in Oxford only by sight, recalled Miss Skene as 'a middle-aged daughter who sang Handel finely and wrote religious novels'.¹⁸ Even in later years, her voice remained strong; when persuaded to sing some Italian songs in the Festival Concert Room in York while staying with her niece, Mrs Zoë Thomson, wife of the Archbishop of York, it seems that her voice 'came ringing down the great room in a way that astonished her audience'.¹⁹

The Skene's household, according to Sir Walter Scott, was filled with old-fashioned kindness and good humour. James Skene was a fair scholar and spoke fluent French, German and Italian and his influence upon Felicia Skene's learning and education was significant. He encouraged her artistic abilities and allowed her direct access to his friends, and, importantly, to his books.²⁰ When living in Greece, she travelled extensively with him and helped to entertain the many guests who visited the Skene's household. One suspects that even during her mother's lifetime, Felicia became her father's closest companion, a point taken up throughout this chapter.

16 F.M.F. Skene, 'Some Episodes in a Long Life, *Blackwood's Magazine*, June 1896, pp. 828-9.

17 Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

18 Reverend W. Tuckwell, *Reminiscences of Oxford*, Cassell & Co., London, 1901, p. 225.

19 Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

20 M. Jeanne Peterson, in her study of the Paget family, makes the point that many Victorian fathers were their daughter's teachers. M. Jeanne Peterson, *Family, Love, and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1989, pp. 37-9.

Felicia Skene was not a beauty like her sister Caroline, or Curlinda, as Sir Walter Scott re-named her. Caroline had blue eyes and a head of golden hair, whereas Felicia had abundant, curling red hair, a pale complexion and grey eyes. Skene's biographer implies that as a young girl in the shadow of her attractive older sister, Felicia went through a stage of feeling socially and physically inferior: 'Felicia was at that time going through the shy, silent, awkward stage that often comes upon girls at that period of their existence, and [Felicia] was daunted by her conviction that she was extremely plain'.²¹

When young Felicia loathed her hair and told her niece, Zoë, that 'everyone thought my red hair ugly in my youth. I was much depressed'. Curling red hair was obviously an affliction most difficult to bear. She was amused years later when titian locks and pale complexions eventually became fashionable, the result of the artistic Pre-Raphaelite representations of perfect womanhood.²² Yet, what she had failed to inherit in acceptable looks, she apparently made up for with sparkling conversational skills and a capacity to make lifelong friendships. Her shyness disappeared when she arrived in Greece and found herself to be exceptional. Her imposing physical appearance, and her eager pursuit for knowledge of all kinds, marked Felicia Skene an unusual young woman who displayed none of the killjoy religiosity often associated with evangelically-minded young men and women of her generation. She developed a directness which was sometimes a little disconcerting, and her intense interest in moral philosophy singled her out from young women more interested in making suitable marriages. Many friends remarked upon her ready wit, energy and zest for life.

Felicia was tall and statuesque and possessed an animated, musical speaking voice with a hint of a Scottish accent which made people listen and remember her. In a rare photograph shown overleaf taken of her in Oxford in the mid-1850s,²³ she looks distinctly uncomfortable, and lives up to Frances Power Cobbe's description of her as 'always pale, .. rather large features ... grey eyes full of softness and intelligence ... rather tall and largely made'.²⁴

²¹ Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

²² See, for example, the works of Gabriel Rossetti and John Millais, particularly Millais's painting of 'Ophelia', c. 1851.,

²³ Nevil Story Maskelyne (1823-1911), was a pioneer Oxford scientist, photographer and politician. His biography, by a descendant, Vanda Morton, provides a vibrant history of Oxford in the 1850s accompanied by a fascinating collection of rare photographs of Maskelyne's social circle. The Skene's were part of that circle. Morton reproduced a photograph of James Skene, Felicia's father as well as Zoe Skene, Felicia's niece, later to become the wife of William Thomson, later Archbishop of York. Finding this photograph was one of the highlights of my research. Only one other exists taken of Felicia Skene in old age. I am grateful to Vanda Morton for allowing me to reproduce this photograph. Vanda Morton, *Oxford Rebels: The Life and Friends of Nevil Story Maskelyne 1823-1911: pioneer Oxford scientist, photographer and politician*, Alan Sutton, Gloucester, 1987.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73.



Plate 3: Felicia Skene at Oxford c. 1854

James Skene took his family back to Edinburgh when Felicia was still young, probably around 1833-5. There is little information about this period in Felicia's childhood, except that which emerges from her own writing. Felicia Skene recorded moments of her 'happy child-life in Scotland' in an article 'A Noble Life' celebrating the life of her sister, Caroline, which she wrote for *The Argosy*.²⁵ In this, she revealed some important childhood relationships. When visiting London with her parents, Skene's

²⁵ F.M.F. Skene, 'A Noble Life', *The Argosy*, Jan. 1898, pp. 1-17. Caroline Skene married Alexander Rangabé, a descendant of the Emperor Michael Rangabé and the Empress Procopia. He was a poet, statesman, Greek envoy to Berlin, and archaeologist.

playmates were Sir Walter Scott's grandchildren—the Lockharts—John Hugh (Johnny), William, and Charlotte. She enjoyed a special relationship with Mr and Mrs John Lockhart and especially with their daughter, Charlotte, whom she claimed to love like a sister.²⁶ In another article for *Blackwood's*, 'Some Episodes in a Long Life', she recalled that she and Charlotte Lockhart, although not old enough to be introduced to society, were allowed to share in late dinners held at the Lockhart's home when guests—literary men and artists—were invited to meet James Skene. James Skene encouraged his daughter to participate and she mingled freely. John Gibson Lockhart, renowned for his stinging reviews, had been one of the review editors of *Blackwood's Magazine* where he signed himself "the Scorpion". In 1843, he became literary editor of the *Quarterly Review* published by John Murray where, as Skene recorded, he 'reigned in the literary world'. Lockhart expressed strong views about the dubious talents of "lady-pens", but his opinion evidently did not shake Felicia Skene's self-confidence.²⁷

Not many years later, in 1847, Felicia corresponded with Murray about her own literary work and wrote with the knowledge of an insider—she had, indeed, met many of the literary circle attracted to John Murray's publishing house and knew the type of writing they liked to publish. Unfortunately, her knowledge and social connections failed to impress Murray's, who refused her first manuscript. Felicia Skene wrote of Lockhart's noticeable slide into depressive illness, and one wonders whether Lockhart had any role to play in this early rejection; Felicia Skene never intimated her feelings on the subject.²⁸

In each article recalling her youth, Skene mentions Sir Walter Scott and his intimate involvement with her family. James Skene and Sir William Forbes, (Skene's brother-in-law) were described as his 'old chums': as lawyers, Tories and loyal Scots, they had shared much in common.²⁹ One of Felicia's earliest recollections of Scott was recounted in another article, 'Glimpses of Some Vanished Celebrities', written for *Blackwood's Magazine*. Scott visited her father on the day in January 1826 when he learned of Constable's and Ballantyne's disastrous publishing collapse, which entailed his own fortune. He is said to have told James Skene that he was a beggar, but his kind demeanour towards the young child masked his great shock.³⁰ Although she could have

²⁶ According to Skene, when Charlotte married and became a Roman Catholic, her father, John Gibson Lockhart, rejected her and called her a "Romanist". Skene, *Some Episodes*, loc. cit., p. 834.

²⁷ *Ibid.*,

²⁸ Lockhart died in 1854. Skene wrote, 'It must have been only about a year or so before his death that I paid him this last visit; and while I was struck ... by the sadness of his aspect, I was conscious of a far deeper change in his mental condition ...'. *Ibid.*,

²⁹ Entry, Sir Walter Scott, *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XVII, p. 1040.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1035.

only been five years of age at the time, Felicia remembered him listening patiently and sharing an easy chair while she regaled him with 'fairy stories'. At this tender age, she showed the first signs of dramatic imagination which surfaced later in many of her novels. She recalled:

Sir Walter, addressing me with the gentle "dearie" he was wont to apply to little children, told me he did not wish to speak himself ... but he would be glad to listen to some fairy stories if I had any to tell him. Nothing was easier to me, as fairies and hobgoblins were the constant companions of my thoughts at that period of my existence, and I plunged at once into a wild invention of what I imagined to be the manners and customs of such frolicsome beings.³¹

Felicia and her brothers and sisters had a firm and comfortable relationship with their father's friend—the *Dictionary of National Biography* calls it 'a [childhood] spent in the atmosphere of Walter Scott'.³² They turned to him, for example, when studying history. In one letter he wrote to Caroline on the subject, Scott provided an annotated bibliography of studies of English history, together with some advice to young historians:

When you have once got the general facts of history, whether English, Scotch, or any other country fixed in your head, you can read memoirs or detached histories of particular areas or incidents with ease and pleasure, but a traveller must first be sure of his general landmarks before he has any disposition to stop for the purpose of admiring particular points of view.

You have often I daresay tried to wind a puzzled skein of silk—the work goes very slowly till you get the right end of the thread, and then it seems to disentangle itself voluntarily and as a matter of course.

It is just so with reading history. You poke about at first and run your nose against all manner of contradictions till a little light breaks in, and then you begin to see things distinctly.³³

James Skene, unlike many fathers of his generation and class, appears to have been advanced in his thinking about the education of daughters.³⁴ For two years Felicia and Caroline were sent away to a small school in Leamington run by two French Roman Catholic women. Skene's biographer hastened to note that although Roman Catholics,

³¹ F.M.F. Skene, 'Glimpses of Some Vanished Celebrities', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, July 1895, p. 2.

³² *Dictionary of National Biography*, entry for William Forbes Skene, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

³³ Skene, 'A Noble Life', *loc. cit.*, p. 4. Scott's letter is reproduced in full in this article.

³⁴ By contrast, Frances Power Cobbe's father frustrated his daughter's attempts at writing and sent her away as a punishment when she admitted her religious doubts. Caine, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-119. For a useful survey of father/daughter relationships and feminism, see Olive Banks, *Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement*, esp. Chapter 3 'The Evangelical Contribution to Feminism', Martin Robertson, Oxford, 1981, and Olive Banks, *Becoming a Feminist: The Social Origins of First Wave Feminism*, Wheatsheaf Books, 1986, esp. Chapter 3, 'Intimate Relationships'.

the teachers were careful to keep religious opinions to themselves and did not interfere with their pupils' religious instruction.³⁵ Presumably, the Skenes were anxious that their almost-teenaged daughters retain their fluency in French. James Skene encouraged his daughters to learn foreign languages and encouraged the use of his library to extend their private study. He also encouraged them to converse intelligently with his learned friends. As an active member of Edinburgh's intellectual, artistic and philanthropic elite, he brought an interesting group of people into his home and encouraged his daughters to mix with them.

James Skene was a member of various literary and scientific societies. ^{He was} a librarian and museum curator of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, a member of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries, and the Geological Society of London. Through this association, and links with the Edinburgh publishing and philanthropic world, Skene came to know Robert Chambers, whom Felicia also met with her brother on one of their return journeys to Scotland.³⁶ She claims they became great friends and that he lectured her enthusiastically on the geological strata of the earth.³⁷ Subsequently, they exchanged 'pleasant correspondence'.³⁸ James Skene seemed to appreciate his daughter's lively mind and her needs for intellectual stimulation and interesting conversation. When they later lived in Greece, Felicia travelled with him on horseback as his companion, displaying an adventurousness when exploring archaeological sites in the wilder mountainous regions that recalls the travels of other celebrated women travellers.³⁹ Her recollections of their travels provided the basis for a series of articles on Greek life and myth, and her first book, *Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greeks and Turks and on the Shores of the Danube*.⁴⁰

³⁵ Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

³⁶ Robert Chambers was also 'a friend and powerful ally' of Sir Walter Scott. For a brief but informative account of W. & R. Chambers and their publishing and philanthropic publishing, and philanthropic work in Edinburgh, see Lowell T. Frye, 'W. & R. Chambers', in *British Literary Publishing Houses 1820-1880*, Volume 106, Edited by Patricia J. Anderson and Jonathan Rose, Gale Research Inc. Detroit & London, 1991, pp. 83-91.

³⁷ Robert Chambers published his anonymous treatise, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* in 1844. It is not known what Felicia Skene thought about this work which attracted criticism for its atheistic implications. R.K. Webb, 'The Faith of Nineteenth-Century Unitarians: A Curious Incident', in *Victorian Faith in Crisis: Essays on Continuity and Change in Nineteenth-Century Religious Belief*, Edited by Richard J. Helmstadter and Bernard Lightman, Stanford University Press, California, 1990, p. 131.

³⁸ Skene, *Some Episodes*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 840-1.

³⁹ See, for example, Jane Robinson's study, *Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers*, Oxford University Press, 1991, especially her chapter, 'Journeys into Print', pp. 174-199. Felicia Skene's journey recorded in *Wayfaring Sketches*, is not included in this excellent anthology.

⁴⁰ *Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greeks and Turks and on the Shores of the Danube*, By a Seven Years' Resident in Greece, [F.M.F. Skene], Chapman & Hall, London, 1846. This publication, and Skene's anonymous series of articles on Greece published in the *Dublin University Magazine*, in 1847, are discussed in Chapter V.

Among poets and painters, her father introduced her to Sir Edwin Landseer and the Scottish academic and writer, William Aytoun. In an article for *Blackwood's*, 'Glimpses of Some Vanished Celebrities', Felicia described Aytoun as 'not only amusing and interesting in conversation, but an admirable literary critic, who gave me terse and clear accounts of many books of the day'. She was also introduced to Walter Savage Landor, 'a very courteous and agreeable old gentleman' and to the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Longfellow, she wrote, 'impressed me as a man whose ardent spirit was on fire with thoughts and feelings that had little enough to do with this workaday world'. The Russian novelist Turgenev also came within her sphere; she described him as a 'very picturesque-looking man, with long grey hair floating around his keen intellectual face'.⁴¹ With Landseer, Felicia discussed her love for animals.⁴² Her respect for animal life was in keeping with a religious philosophy that embraced all forms of life, and it was a belief in the after life and the immortality of animals which caused her as a young woman to become a vegetarian. Much later in the 1870s, at the urging of Frances Power Cobbe, she joined the influential Anti-Vivisection crusade.⁴³

⁴¹ Skene, 'Glimpses' *Blackwood's Magazine*, *loc. cit.*, p.14.

⁴² Felicia Skene was particularly fond of dogs. She seemed always to have at least two as companions. One dog, Tatters, came with her on her prison visits. Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁴³ Cobbe established the Victoria Street Society, and edited antivivisection's newspaper, *The Zooopholist* [sic]. Barbara Caine has suggested that for Cobbe and other Victorian feminists, 'there was a close connection between the antivivisection and the feminist movement ... both fighting to protect defenceless creatures from the limitless powers of men'. Caine, *op. cit.*, p. 106. Skene's connection with the movement seems to have stemmed primarily from her loathing of cruelty to animals. For an analysis of women's involvement in the Anti-vivisection movement in the 19th century, and Frances Power Cobbe's role, see Mary Ann Elston, 'Women and Anti-vivisection in Victorian England, 1870-1900', in *Vivisection in Historical Perspective*, Edited by Nicolaas A. Rupke, Croom Helm, London, 1987, pp. 259-294.

Religious Connections

Felicia Skene came under a number of formative religious influences both during her childhood and in later life. Surprisingly, her mother, Jane,⁴⁴ seems little evident in the articles Felicia wrote describing her early days in France, Scotland, Greece and England, although Skene's biographer records that they were devoted. Devotion to mother was an honoured Victorian biographical convention, although without evidence to the contrary, one must assume that Jane Skene, described as 'a tall, dignified Scotswoman with frank and pleasant manners', provided a stable and happy environment for all her children.⁴⁵ She had a delicate constitution having borne seven children, but Felicia's brief account suggests a woman who allowed her children to play and develop their talents more freely than many mothers of her generation.

In one vivid vignette, Felicia describes making a toy gun in the Skene's drawing room with Johnny Lockhart who was staying with them. Unable to walk, he was confined to the sofa and they played with the gun, as Felicia recalled, 'the great danger of my mother's old china, if to nothing else.' In the same account, she describes playing on the lawns on a Sunday, and playing charades. This kind of activity would not have occurred on the Sabbath in a strictly Evangelical household. When entertaining Louise de Berri and her brother, Henri Dieudonné, Duc de Bordeaux (daughter and son of the murdered Duc de Berri who were in exile with their grandfather, King Charles X of France at Holyrood), the children were permitted to play hide and seek, entertain their friends and the adults, and to construct elaborate games.⁴⁶ According to Felicia, it was governesses and tutors who maintained the sternest rule.⁴⁷ Her mother's domestic strictness remains unclear, but in matters of religious instruction Mrs Skene made sure that Felicia was schooled by some of England's most pious men. She was, however, a natural pupil. Had she been born a male, one suspects that she would have almost certainly contemplated taking up the clerical profession. As a woman, however, her options were narrower and she ultimately decided against joining an Anglican sisterhood,

⁴⁴ Robert Lee Wolff, in his brief study of Felicia Skene in *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York and London, 1977, states, mistakenly, that Felicia's mother was named Elizabeth, p. 148.

⁴⁵ Rickards wrote, 'In 1862, the first great sorrow in her immediate family circle fell upon Felicia. Her mother, to whom she had always been particularly devoted, died; leaving the father more than ever dependent on his daughter'. *Op. cit.*, p. 177. Jane Skene's portrait was painted by Sir Henry Raeburn, R.A.

⁴⁶ Skene, 'Glimpses', *loc. cit.*, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Skene, 'A Noble Life', *loc. cit.*, p. 2.

despite some urging from her cousin, the Bishop of Brechin,⁴⁸ and her religious mentor, the Reverend Thomas Chamberlain.

Felicia Skene's family had more than its fair share of men who had taken holy orders. On her mother's side, one of her ancestors, William Forbes (1585-1634) was the first Bishop of Edinburgh, a High Churchman noted for his enthusiasm for reconciliation with Rome. Felicia's maternal cousin, Alexander Penrose Forbes (1817-1875), the so-called 'Scottish Pusey', became Archbishop of Brechin and was an ardent supporter of Anglican sisterhoods. He was a prolific writer and 'laboured hard to further Tractarian principles in Scotland'. His brother, George Hay Forbes (1821-1875), was a Patristic scholar and a parish priest in Burntisland in Scotland where he established a church, and set up his own printing press. He also was closely associated with the Tractarians.⁴⁹ As children, these male cousins had nothing to do with Felicia's first Christian teaching but were undoubtedly influential in later life. Alexander Forbes' connection with the Prisoners' Aid Society may, for example, have initially kindled Felicia Skene's interest in prison visiting.

Dean E.B. Ramsay prepared Felicia for Confirmation and had a commanding influence upon her religious growth as a young woman. They remained friends throughout life and it was Ramsay who, as we learned, urged her to speak out against the evils of prostitution and gave her encouragement to use her literary voice in fiction and prose writing.⁵⁰ Skene described him as her 'earliest teacher in divinity' and suggested that his saintly character had a powerful influence upon her and all who knew him. She admired his churchmanship and his adherence to the principles of the prayer-book.⁵¹ When staying in Edinburgh with her brother William, she recalled being taken to hear Dr. Thomas Chalmers, the Scottish Evangelical and theologian, preach in 'a dark out-of-the-way church ... filled, apparently, by people from the lowest parts of the town'. His sermon failed to impress her, even though she noted his 'rugged eloquence and manifest earnestness' and his 'righteousness of the highest type which was conveyed in all his words'. She was, however, repelled by his uncouth appearance, his rough manner and

⁴⁸ The Bishop of Brechin, Alexander Forbes, founded the sisterhood of St. Mary and St. Modwenna, and was a philanthropist and warm friend and appointee of W.E. Gladstone. He wrote many theological works and was a contributor to the *Ecclesiastic* (edited by Thomas Chamberlain), the *Christian Remembrancer*, the *North British*, *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*. He was a visitor to the Dundee Royal Infirmary, on the committee of a Model Lodginghouse Association, the Dundee Free Library, Dundee School Board and a director of the Prisoners' Aid Society. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol VII, 1908, pp. 378-9.

⁴⁹ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 522.

⁵⁰ c.f. Ramsay's comments to her in a letter regarding her article on penitentiaries referred to earlier in Chapter 1, *Women's Voices*.

⁵¹ Skene, *Some Episodes*, loc. cit., p. 841.

his 'very broad native accent'.⁵² Clearly, she was too young at the time to have appreciated his arguments for Natural Religion.⁵³

A more unusual influence was William Ewart Gladstone's sister, Helen Jane. Sir John Gladstone was an old Tory friend of James Skene and it was through this family connection that she and Felicia were brought into one another's company in the late 1830s. (Helen Gladstone was addicted not only to her adopted religion but also to laudanum and was a severe embarrassment to the Evangelical and later, High Church Anglican, Gladstone family.)⁵⁴ Although she was much older, Miss Gladstone took a great interest in Felicia. Miss Gladstone had perhaps noted her religiosity and her willingness to discuss religious principles as she had been instructed. Skene wrote that when they met, Miss Gladstone had already become a Roman Catholic and was 'a most ardent convert'. She showed the young Felicia 'great kindness' and took her to see a painting by an unidentified old master—'a beautiful life-sized picture of the Madonna and Child'—which left a deep impression upon her young mind. Miss Gladstone invited Felicia to stay with her from time to time in Warwickshire and, according to the recollections, her discussions always focused upon religious conversion. In Miss Skene's words, Helen Gladstone was a 'tall, fair-haired lady with very winning manners ... and it was her great desire to make proselytes'. But Miss Gladstone's assiduous efforts went unrewarded.⁵⁵ Although religion gradually took a central place in her existence, Felicia Skene never moved her allegiance to Rome, although the Gladstone connection was instrumental later when Felicia wrote an article, first for the *Church Quarterly Review* on Bishop Lycurgus's life, followed by a small book which she dedicated to William Gladstone with whom she had corresponded about the late Archbishop's letters and papers.⁵⁶

By far the greatest personal religious influence in Felicia Skene's life did not manifest itself until she had reached her mid to late twenties. By that time, she had

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 841.

⁵³ For a discussion of Thomas Chalmers' part in this discourse, see John M. Robson, 'The Fiat and Finger of God: The Bridgewater Treatises', in *Victorian Faith in Crisis*, pp. 71-125.

⁵⁴ H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone: 1809-1874*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986, p. 89.

⁵⁵ Skene, 'Glimpses', *loc. cit.*, p. 6.

⁵⁶ Felicia Mary Frances Skene to W.E. Gladstone, letters, Add MSS 44450, 44453, 44454, British Library. Gladstone's replies are noted in H.C.G. Matthew, *The Gladstone Diaries with Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence*, Volume IX, Jan 1875-Dec 1880, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986, p.137, p. 240-1. The Archbishop's letters were printed in F.M.F. Skene, *The Life of Alexander Lycurgus*, 1877. From Skene's letters, it is clear that she was very concerned about the fate of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire and was sensitive to the political implications of publishing one the late Archbishop's letters, in view of 'the animus displayed by the Archbishop against Russia' and 'the present crisis'. She was referring to the Bulgarian atrocities (1876) and the war which was raging between Russia and Turkey. Add MS 44454, f. 295-6.

travelled widely and had lived for seven years in Greece where she had observed the glories, the sense of community, and the rituals of Greek Orthodox Christianity. Unlike her brother, James, and sister, Caroline, who married into a Greek family and converted to the Greek Church, she remained resolutely within the orthodox Anglican tradition. She did, however, confide to her friend, Lady Sophia Palmer, that had she stayed in Greece, she would have joined the Greek Church since she enjoyed its life and its liturgy.⁵⁷ During her time in Greece she had witnessed the legacies of Turkish rule and the practices of Islam which left an indelibly negative impression upon her mind, and this reconfirmed her views on the inherently merciful qualities of Anglican Christianity. Athens, of course, was a popular port-of-call for most clergy visiting the Holy Land and retracing the steps of the apostles.

In Athens, she met and conversed with Arthur Stanley, later Dean of Westminster, about the antiquities of Greece and listened to his sermon on St. Paul.⁵⁸ Once back in England, she enjoyed the sermons of John William Burgon, later the Dean of Chichester, and was impressed with his benevolence and devotion to good works, particularly his rescue work of young prostitutes. She evidently found no fault in his 'driving about for hours in London, alone in a hansom cab, with a far from respectable girl for whom he was trying to find a home'. She insisted that Burgon had a 'childlike simplicity of character [which] often brought him into very unusual positions'.⁵⁹ Although her trust in the purity of the Dean's motives was, perhaps, more an indication of her own character and desire to find re-employment for such women, such questions about an individual's behaviour were not raised overtly at the time. As H.C.G. Matthew noted recently in his biographical work on Gladstone, '[t]he redemption of prostitutes was an activity which, in principle, had an obvious Christian justification'.⁶⁰

In Oxford, Felicia Skene was easily placed to attend sermons given by some of England's leading and influential theologians. In her recollections, she compared the sermons of the 'gentle and poetic' John Keble, with the lengthy sermons of Henry Parry Liddon. She recalled John Henry Newman's sermons before he left the Church of England, and his only 'public utterance in Oxford after his succession to the Church of Rome' which, according to her memory, was 'a highly controversial discourse in which the claims of St. Peter ... were set forth with uncompromising vehemence'. Felicia

⁵⁷ Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 352

⁵⁸ Skene recalled attending his sermons given to 'the very small congregation of English-speaking people who assembled to hear him', *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁹ Skene, 'Episodes', *loc. cit.*, p. 845. The Dean of Chichester took it upon himself to find homes for prostitutes as part of his philanthropic work. It seems that, like William Gladstone, his motives were later questioned.

⁶⁰ Matthew, *Gladstone: 1809-1874*, p. 91.

Skene's sense of humour emerged clearly in her remarks on the sermons of Dr. Pusey. She showed no disrespect for the man who was instrumental in establishing the Community of St. Thomas the Martyr, later named the Sisterhood of Mercy of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, with which she was closely associated but, referring to another of his sermons, she wrote an amusing account of Dr. Pusey's 'descent':

I heard Dr. Pusey preach several times, but one of his sermons was so characteristic of the man that I remember it with especial clearness; he began it in these words, "My brethren, let us go down alive into the pit;" and thither indeed we did go, conducted by him with a minuteness of detail and a descriptive realism which made a foreign lady who accompanied me declare emphatically that he must have visited the locality himself.⁶¹

Adherence to the tested tenets of Christianity and the Articles of Faith set down by the Anglican church were of utmost importance in Felicia Skene's religious development. Through her writing it is possible to trace the developments in her religious thinking revealed in appeals to emotionalism and spiritual communication with the Divine. *The Divine Master*, a Platonic-style dialogue between "the Child" and "the Divine Master" which she published anonymously in Lent, 1852, was, as she explained in the Preface, 'simply to illustrate, under this convenient form, the various trials and difficulties, incidental to the progressive stages of the Spiritual Life.'⁶² Her early fiction was quite different; *St. Alban's, or, The Prisoners of Hope*, written in 1853, is a tale filled with religious passion, a girl's ecstatic sacramental worship, and an attack on rationalism, Chartism, Mechanics' Institutes, intellectualism, and 'the false and destructive tenets of liberalism'. This novel, also published anonymously, has been described by Joseph Ellis Baker in his study, *The Novel and the Oxford Movement*, as a 'novel of the common-sense fifties that is incandescent with impassioned religious enthusiasm'.⁶³ It reflected a tumultuous period in her own religious life when she was influenced greatly by Reverend Thomas Chamberlain, (1810-1892), the Tractarian writer and charismatic High Church priest of St. Thomas the Martyr, Felicia's chosen church in Oxford.

As she grew older, Felicia Skene expanded her knowledge of religion through her own reading, and particularly through her friendship with Dr. Max Friederich Müller (1823-1900), the distinguished Sanskrit scholar, orientalist, and philologist with whom she discussed Christianity and other world religions. Nevertheless, in common with her literary and philanthropic counterpart, Charlotte Maria Tucker, who read the Koran and the Sikh holy book, the Granth, for personal instruction (and moral ammunition), Skene

⁶¹ Skene, 'Glimpses', *loc. cit.*, p. 15.

⁶² *The Divine Master*, [F.M.F. Skene], Joseph Masters & Son, London, 1852.

⁶³ Joseph Ellis Baker, *The Novel and the Oxford Movement*, Russell & Russell, New York, 1965. I have not been able to obtain a copy of this novel and have had to rely upon Baker who discusses the plot in detail between pages 127-135.

remained convinced that Christianity was ultimately the only religion which provided humanity with hope and unconditional love.⁶⁴ She revealed her philosophy on prayer and religion clearly in one of her letters to written to Sir Henry Acland in the year of her own death, 1899. In reply to his question about which book of prayers she used, she responded frankly:

You ask me what book of private prayers I use - well really none - I know by heart some prayers out of a good manual which I use more from habit than anything else -because I can never feel that prayers out of a book - being the words and thoughts of another person are real prayers as a means of intimate communication with our Divine Lord. I believe that time and life-giving religion is simply a close personal union with the Lord Jesus Christ - a life in Him, with Him and by Him, the dearest and closest friendship - in all humility be it said - but not unwarrantably because He Himself said "Ye are my friends" - well thus ever striving for near and nearer union with him. The only real prayer seems to me to be that which springs from our own heart towards Him which speaks to Him fully, freely of all our wants, all our sins - all our deep desires - the first and highest being to be ever drawn closer and closer to Him - I do not think that prayers out of a book manufactured by someone else can ever take the place of the free outpouring of the soul to His divine, all comprehending spirit - I have told you just what I feel but everyone must judge for themselves in *those secrets of the inner life*.⁶⁵

Religious enthusiasm and, to a lesser extent, religious tolerance, are both discernible in Felicia Skene's writing. Her tolerance towards different religious communions increased noticeably as she grew older, and although she favoured Anglican orthodoxy in all her writing and in her religious observance, she was also sympathetic towards Roman Catholicism. She espoused the belief that she could always hold out 'the right hand of fellowship' with those devoted to the 'Divine Master'.⁶⁶ In this, she was unlike many other Protestant religious writers, including Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker who remained deeply suspicious of Rome. According to Rickards who canvassed opinions widely when writing Skene's biography, Felicia Skene's friends, 'those who knew her and loved her ... refused to identify her religious life with that of any party.'⁶⁷

⁶⁴ According, to Rickards, such discussions took place using Greek as the common language. Dr. Müller pronounced Miss Skene one of the two most interesting ladies he ever met in his life. The other lady was Lady Victoria Welby. Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁶⁵ Skene to Sir Henry Acland, letter, (signed Ever affec. Yrs. F.M.F. Skene), Feb. 7, 1899, MS Acland, d. 80, folios 79-80, Duke Humphrey's Library, University of Oxford. [Emphasis added in italics]. This letter was annotated by Sarah Acland - "Religious - Beautiful letter from his old friend Miss Skene".

⁶⁶ Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 288. Rickards published two short memoirs of Felicia Skene at the end of her biography by Lady Sophia Palmer, and Charles W. Wood, editor of *The Argosy*. Included within the body of the biography are recollections from Mrs. Humphry Ward, Frances Power Cobbe, Miss Elizabeth Wordsworth, Principle of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, Lady Rose Weigall, Major Arthur Griffiths, former Governor of Oxford Gaol, and Mr William Tallack of the Howard League for Penal Reform.

Her strongest prejudices were not against other Christian denominations, but against acts of premeditated and legal cruelty to human beings and to animals, particularly related to prison regimes, capital punishment and vivisection. She had contact with members from many different religious communions throughout her life, from Scottish Episcopalians and Presbyterians to Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox believers. In her own religious life, she first embraced Anglicanism, then High Church Anglicanism—and she admired the strengths of the Evangelicals. Perhaps her tolerance within the Christian tradition stemmed from the idyllic days she spent in Greece.

The Islands of Greece

Felicia Skene was seventeen when she arrived in Athens in 1838. James Skene had been persuaded by his son, James Henry, to bring the family there to enjoy its climate and classical surroundings, and to re-unite the family. For Felicia, this was the beginning of a seven year adventure; residence in Greece furnished her with enough material to write a book of poetry, *The Islands of Greece*, a travelogue, *Wayfaring Among the Greek and Turks*, and provide the background for two novels, *Use and Abuse; A Tale*, and, *Through the Shadows: A Test of the Truth*. James Henry Skene had been in the 73rd Regiment stationed in Malta. After selling his commission, he was appointed first as British consul at Aleppo, and was later a resident of Corfu.⁶⁸ He married Rhalou Rangabé and became father of two daughters, Zoë and Janie, both of whom went to England to receive their schooling.

Caroline, Felicia's older sister, also married into the Rangabé family, but with great difficulty, created partly by Greek Church strictures designed to prevent double marriages, (that is, a brother and sister marrying two people in similar relation in another family), and by the necessity for Caroline to renounce her Anglican commitment and convert to the Greek Orthodox church. Felicia wrote about this complicated familial intertwining in her article, *A Noble Life*. Although she enjoyed a varied and interesting social life, Felicia appeared never to seek a match either from a noble Greek family or others in the European community who lived in and around Athens. Her father built a house at the foot of Mount Pentelicus and spent his time exploring ruins with Felicia, or

⁶⁸ James Henry Skene wrote several travel books, *The Frontier Lands of the Christian and the Turk, Anadol, the Last House of the Faithful, Rambles in the Syrian Deserts*, and *With Lord Stratford in the Crimean War*. He corresponded with the publisher, John Murray, intermittently throughout the 1830s and 1840s about the possibility of publication, and his letters are held in Murray's Archives, Albemarle Street, London. Letters from James Skene detailing the difficulties confronted constructing a church at Aleppo in Syria where he was British Consul, are held in the MS collection, Lambeth Palace Library, London.

painting and sketching. These were years which seemed to inflame Felicia's already fertile imagination.

Her first attempt at poetry, one may imagine, sought to emulate the popular Mrs. Hemans' *Greek Songs*, and to recapture some of Byron's Hellenist inflections. Those poems were illustrated by her father but although the sketches were saved, the manuscript has been lost. Her biographer recorded that the book began with a poem called *Ianthe*, and was followed by narrative poem entitled *Greek Fanaticism*.⁶⁹ These initial poems were followed by *The Islands of Greece*, published in 1843 by Grant and Sons of Edinburgh. They were not successful, and Felicia was embarrassed to discover that Frances Power Cobbe, whom she met for the first time in Ireland in 1846, had actually read them. According to Frances Cobbe's recollection, Felicia Skene was the first living author she had ever met. Nevertheless, she described the poetry of her friend as 'distinctly juvenile'.⁷⁰ Miss Skene resisted the temptation to write poetry again and described her poetry in later life as "simply worthless and defying all rules of versification".⁷¹

Felicia Skene was clearly influenced by the epic and neo-classical style of the fashionable romantic poets, particularly Byron, but also Shelley, Keats, Landor, and again, Mrs. Hemans. Remember, too, that Felicia read Greek, not just the Orthodox Liturgy, but also the classics. Unfortunately, erudition at an early age did nothing to prevent her 'poetical effusions' and clumsy borrowings from familiar themes. At least her surroundings were genuine and contributed to her inspiration. Only one poem appears to reveal something of her own emotions, a lament which speaks poignantly of the death of a loved one entitled, "To C - S- Who Died in Athens, 1842". Readers were left to guess the identity of "C.S". Felicia was twenty-one when she wrote this, mourning the loss of a young suitor, or, perhaps a sapphic love? The poem hints strongly of a loving attachment and promise of a shared life. Erotic undercurrents cannot be ruled out, but neither can a simple, strong friendship between two young women. Such friendships could entertain an ideal romantic, but not necessarily, sexual, love. Felicia Skene remained single by choice, but from scattered correspondence we know she enjoyed enduring friendships with women. Some, like Frances Power Cobbe, were single, but many of her female friends were married, and she evidently also enjoyed the

⁶⁹ Rickards indicates that she sighted the MS of Felicia Skene's first poems, *op. cit.*, p. 54. The sketches made by James Skene are among a number preserved in the National Library of Scotland's pictorial collections.

⁷⁰ Rickards, *ibid.*, p. 72.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

confidence and friendship of men, married and single.⁷² For those seeking to know more about her sexual life, there is little to guide an interpretation. An adolescent crush, an intense female friendship, a platonic attachment, or simply unrequited love may provide an explanation for the poem. Admiration from afar might have provided Felicia with the sensations of love and been responsible for the anguish that the writer expressed.⁷³ The reader must judge:

To C— S—Who Died in Athens, 1842

One month, one little month ago,
We stood together side by side,
Watching the eastern sunset glow,
Upon the blue and heaving tide;
And both alike in youth's gay spring,
The world unknown before us lay
No cloud as yet had power to fling
A single shade on life's short day.

Yes! both were young; but not the same,
For cherub hope on thee was smiling,
And dreams of love, and joy, and fame,
Thy fearless soul all bright and beguiling.
And I! I scarcely dared to think
Upon my future lonely years,
I felt my heart despairing sink,
Oppress'd with dark prophetic fears.

I thought with horror on the days
Which I must pass unloved, alone,
Uncheer'd by hope's enlivening rays.
And cursed with dreams I would not own;
To the smiling earth thy gaze was turn'd,
As though to seek some distant goal,
And joys to come already burn'd
In herald-visions thy young soul.

And mine was on the tranquil sea,
That seem'd to woo me to its breast—
I almost wish'd that hour to be
In its unfathom'd depths at rest;
But from our mortal view was hid
The awful phantom hovering o'er us,
We little deem'd, uncall'd, unbid,
Death stood in that bright hour before us.

Unthought of by us both alike,
Perchance he paused a moment there,
And scarcely knew which breast to strike,
Or whose young head once more to spare.
The blow came down—on thee it fell,
On thee, alas! so bright, so gay;
Thy voice had utter'd no farewell,

⁷² Rickards intimates that Felicia Skene had received and rejected many proposals of marriage, including those from one 'devoted lover' who reportedly 'proposed to her annually for eighteen years.' One, a Monsieur de Saulcy, 'a great traveller, linguist, archaeologist and writer', allegedly admired Felicia Skene all his life, *op. cit.*, p. 79, p. 63.

⁷³ Martha Vicinus has suggested that secrecy as well as distance could provide an essential pleasure for those women who loved a remote figure. Vicinus, *Independent Women*, pp. 190-1.

Ere thy gladsome spirit pass'd away.

And now thou'rt laid in dreamless sleep,
 Whilst I, O God, am struggling still,
 And know the tears are vain I weep,
 But cannot soothe my bosom's thrill—
 O rise, from thy deep grace arise,
 To youth, to joy, to life return,
 Recall thy bright soul from the skies,
 Thine ashes from the funeral urn.
 And let me lay my weary head
 In thy yet warm deserted tomb,
 I shall not fear the mouldering dead—

Is there not *silence* with their gloom?

The poem refers to loneliness - 'I thought with horror on the days which I must pass unloved, alone ...', but Felicia was certainly not alone in Athens. She had her parents, her sister Caroline before she married, her brother James and her little nieces, Zoë and Janie, as well as the company of domiciled (or exiled?) friends and visitors who relished the Skene's well-known hospitality. Recalling her time in Athens, Felicia numbered amongst their distinguished visitors, Dean Stanley, Professor Blackie, Sir Richard Church, Lady Humphry Davy, Lord Lyons, Sir Stratford de Redcliffe, and Captain Basil Hall. James Skene, by virtue of his son's position, enjoyed the patronage of King Otho who loaned a yacht so that the Skene's could comfortably explore the islands and coastlines of Greece and Turkey. Felicia and her sisters enjoyed a deal of light-hearted entertainment, attending balls, soirees, the opera, and parties among the *corps diplomatique*.

The gaiety of social life in Athens contrasted pleasantly with the thrill of travelling into the Greek hinterlands in the company of her father, but it was probably at this time that Felicia began to question the ultimate purpose of her life. Although exploring and absorbing the exotic surroundings provided her writer's mind with images which lasted a lifetime, the solitude allowed her time to think more deeply. In *Wayfaring Sketches*, Felicia wrote, 'we always found that our mountain rambles were admirably adapted for gaining a still further insight into the domestic life of the Greek peasantry; and it was rarely that [the rambles] terminated without an adventure of some kind.'⁷⁴ Her ability to recreate scenes of Greek village life in popular articles were informed by her travels, as were the sad (and accurate) accounts of the slave markets and harems. This kind of keen social observation was the first public indication of her interest in the condition of women. Her shocked and bitter account of the forlorn sight of young girls and women

⁷⁴ *Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greeks and Turks, and on the Shores of the Danube*, by a Seven Year's Resident, [F.M.F. Skene], Chapman & Hall, London, 1847, p. 41.

displayed like animals before prospective masters, contributed in part to the unforgiving hostility she was to show to the brothel keepers and pimps later in Oxford.

During what was to become a seven years' residence, Felicia Skene travelled widely around mainland Greece. She visited islands of the Aegean, sailed up the Bosphorus, and travelled into Asia Minor, Syria and Turkey. She became more keenly interested in Greek history, ancient and contemporary, in folklore, legend, mythology and archaeology accompanying a man as knowledgeable as her father, and gained a broader education than most women of her generation. She spoke the language fluently and picked up legends and folk tales as she travelled, some of which appeared later in journal articles. So eagerly did she absorb the historical ambience of ruins and temples that her imagination was fired with poetic, oriental, and classical imagery which surfaced time and time again in her fiction. Nineteenth and twentieth-century critics have found the tendency 'wild', 'fantastic', 'sensational', and 'gruesome'.⁷⁵ George Eliot, writing to her friend, Mrs Henry Houghton, reported that she found Felicia Skene's first novel, *Use and Abuse*, of which significant parts are set in Turkey, 'a long, wild book'.⁷⁶ Margaret Maison, much later, observed that Miss Skene's 'flamboyant eccentricity and melodramatic style' lifted Tractarian fiction out of 'the prosaic world of gentlemanly vicars and middle-class Victorian households'.

By the time she returned to England in 1845, Felicia Skene had absorbed experiences and observed cultures which remained vivid in her memory until death. These gave her a comprehension and appreciation of the best and worst aspects of European life and religion, as well as the essential iota of experience and understanding often missing from the lives of her more zealous philanthropic sisters in England. Arriving as a sheltered teenaged girl, she left Greece more mature and reflective. Her Greek sojourn was an enlarging and informing episode in her life. And then, suddenly, after the gay social round, the travel, and her sisters' brilliant marriages,⁷⁷ she found herself a spinster expected to become the devoted 'home daughter', back in grey-skied England.

⁷⁵ Margaret Maison, *Search Your Soul, Eustace: Victorian Religious Novels*, Sheed & Ward, London, 1961, pp. 51-4.

⁷⁶ George Eliot to Mrs. Henry Houghton, Geneva, 4 Oct. 1849. G.S. Haight (ed.), *The George Eliot Letters*, Volume VIII, 1840-1870, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1978, p. 19.

⁷⁷ Felicia's sister, Eliza, married Baron Charles de Heidenstam, Swedish Envoy to Greece, in 1839, Catherine married Mr. Foster Grierson, Queen's Printer to Ireland in 1840, and Caroline married Alexander Rizo de Rangabé in 1845.

Edinburgh, Leamington, Oxford, and The Churchman's Companion

The halcyon days ended as the Skene's travelled back to the British Isles. The journey was not uneventful.⁷⁸ The Skene family, including the young nieces, Zoë and Janie Skene, travelled at Easter by steamer from the port of Piraeus, up the River Danube, to Linz in Austria. From there they travelled by coach across Europe, and then by steamer to Edinburgh. Leaving Piraeus, Felicia described the scene—the steamer, the crowds and the bustle and noise—‘Just before starting, the tumult reached its climax, and became one general scramble. No man could keep both his temper and his luggage!’ She seemed to have kept her humour, and the travelogue provided her with an opportunity to reflect upon the mental as well as physical journeys that individuals undertake. Her writing in the final paragraphs, clearly tendentious and moralising, reveals the first open hints of her thinking and her calling:

But it was the great voice of the Danube we should hear no more: it might tell its tale now, perhaps, to more attentive ears; but for us the opportunity was past, the journey ended. And there is another thought that at the close of a long journey must always, I think, rise painfully in our minds.

It is the question we must involuntarily ask ourselves, of what trace our own steps have left in the paths we have trodden in the lands we have visited? Have we walked among barbarian nations idly to moralise over their ignorance and error, or exult in our own superior knowledge and thrice happy lot, without making one effort to cast the faintest spark of light among them? Have we fathered all the amusement, all the pleasure, which the varied scenes afforded, and can none say that we came there for good? Or, yet more, have we passed through gay and peopled cities, where the deadly spirits of scepticism and bold vice, and false morality courted and received, are all abroad, arrogating to ourselves the blessed name of Christian, and allowed one action or one word of ours to cast dishonour or ridicule upon that high and mighty calling?⁷⁹

The first year was spent in Edinburgh where the Skenes re-established themselves, and Felicia Skene became not just the dutiful daughter, but also the constant companion and mentor to her young nieces. Between home and church, she began to write and make contact with the Edinburgh publishers, friends of her father and of her brother, William, who had stayed on in Edinburgh. David Douglas, of Edmonstone and Douglas, was a friend of William Skene and proved to be a useful adviser to Felicia and was later one of her publishers. William Blackwood was also a part of the Skene's circle although he did not publish any of Felicia's early work. It was his son, John Blackwood, who became a literary confidante and publisher to Felicia many years later after she expanded her literary horizons to write for the popular literary journals of the

⁷⁸ Details of the journey are described in *Wayfaring Sketches*.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 342-3.

day. ~~Robert~~ Chambers, the publisher and geologist, whom she had met years earlier advised her to send her travel manuscript to John Murray in London.

In her letter to John Murray written in 1846, Felicia suggested that her travelogue would be a suitable inclusion for the widely read *Home and Colonial Library* series of travel books. She thought that her work would best be taken as a complete manuscript rather than be split up into episodes.⁸⁰ John Murray eventually declined publication but passed the manuscript on to Chapman & Hall who published the work in full in 1847. It was one volume of 343 pages, sold cloth bound for nine shillings, and it ran to two editions. This was her first taste of literary success. The reviews were gracious. The critic of *Britannia*, announced that *Wayfaring Sketches* 'have the grace and vivacity of the female mind. We do not think there can be given a more lively and pleasing idea of the countries she visited'.⁸¹ The *Dublin University Magazine* wrote a lengthy eleven page review and took a more serious view. The critic noted that Skene had presented a new picture of Modern Greece which Skene described as 'just arisen from that degrading thralldom which for so long had blotted her immortal name from the scale of nations. [Greece] had burst the Moslem chains, and she was free'.⁸² This, the reviewer found, 'in a measure subversive to popular notions'.⁸³

At the time of writing her first novel, *Use and Abuse*,⁸⁴ (described by her biographer as 'a religious novel, of a fervid, not to say perfervid character'), the Skenes moved to Leamington so that Mrs Skene could receive the attention of Dr. Jephson, a well-known physician. Felicia assisted in establishing a home in the fashionable spa town and made a number of new friends, although she found the town little to her taste, especially after Athens and Edinburgh. Here that she came under the influence of an earnest High Church clergyman, the Reverend John Lincoln Galton, described by Rickards as 'a member of the extreme High Church party'. Years later, Felicia rued her vulnerability to his strong influence—it seems that she admired his devoted religious life and teaching, and accepted his views unquestioningly—and regretted having surrendered 'too much of her religious liberty and independence'.⁸⁵

High Churchmen—including those like Reverend Galton—were not, as historian R K. Webb has commented, 'content to sit and lament ... and tried instead to reassert the application of the old High Church teachings to their time'. Many High Churchmen had a

80 Felicia Skene to John Murray, Feb. 1846. *John Murray Archives*.

81 *The Publishers' Circular*, No. 237, Vol. X, Aug. 2, 1847.

82 *Wayfaring Sketches*, p. 8.

83 *Dublin University Magazine*, Vol. XXX, Aug. 1847, p. 251.

84 *Use and Abuse: A Tale*, Messrs. J. Rivington & Son, London, 1849.

85 Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

sense of mission and were active in their communities. As Webb observed, the Oxford Movement ‘seriously frightened most Englishmen’, but the teachings and devotional aspects of the church had attracted ‘many people, increasingly hungry for beauty, awesomeness, and mystery [and those] dissatisfied by the range of intellectual, economic, and political explanations they were being offered—the religious manifestations of romanticism’.⁸⁶

Felicia Skene was one of those attracted, not only through her recent religious experiences in Greece, but also by her religious associations and inclinations. More pertinent, is that she was well equipped intellectually to understand the serious theological arguments put forward by ecclesiastics such as Galton, and later, Reverend Thomas Chamberlain. Women like Felicia Skene were obvious targets, and novelists such Mrs Frances Trollope satirised feminine devotion to “Romish” priests, accusing susceptible women of being drawn to elaborate High Church ritual for less than strictly religious reasons.⁸⁷ Followers became figures of ridicule, as the full-page *Punch* cartoons overleaf, cruelly reveal.⁸⁸ These by John Leech dated 1850, refer to the “Fashions for 1850”, and highlight the “Romish” practices of High Church devotees, including clandestine auricular confessions and the propensity of female proselytes to follow saintly priest-figures. Ascetic accolytes, and men of the church adopting the clerical accoutrements of Rome, women wearing nunish gowns, rings, lace, and incense, modest maidens in danger of ‘going over to Rome’, watchful mother “superiors”, and maidenly spinsters: these figure prominently in Leech’s brilliant satire. (These accoutrements were loathed by other evangelical writers, including Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker, who despised such affectations and were on the constant lookout for signs among the clergy.)

⁸⁶ R.K. Webb, *Modern England From the 18th Century to the Present*, (2nd Edition), George Allen & Unwin, London, 1980, pp. 234-6.

⁸⁷ Frances Milton Trollope wrote *Father Eustace, A Tale of the Jesuits* in 1847 as a propaganda novel ‘in the wake of Newman’s defection to Rome’ The novel features a ‘Romish priest given to spiritual and sexual seduction’. John Sutherland, *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction*, p. 639.

⁸⁸ *Pencillings from Punch* by John Leech, Bradbury, Evans & Co., London, 1868, ‘Early Pencillings from Punch’, pp. 230-1.



“FASHIONS FOR 1850 ; —

. The Puseyites assumed a peculiarity of Costume, and were busy proselytising—intruding themselves into families principally through

Plate 4: Leech's view, in 1850, of Puseyites and High Church Anglican “weak-minded and excitable women”. (*Pencilings from Punch*, London, 1868), p. 230.



— A PAGE FOR THE PUSEYITES.”

the agency of weak-minded and excitable women, to their own great discredit, as well as to the shame of their proselytes.—1850.

Plate 5: Leech's observations played upon the perceptions of women's vulnerability to manipulative religious mentors. (*Pencilings from Punch*, London, 1868, p. 231)

Attraction to the religious life was evident in many of Felicia Skene's writings as it was in her everyday life. At one time, she wore dark clothing—'long, severe-looking, made with big, black sleeves'—which seemed, in the view of the Bishop of Brechin, to emulate the garments worn by Anglican sisters. He assumed then that his cousin was 'only one step from donning the official [dress] of a regular Sister'. Shortly after that crucial time, Felicia signalled her independence and resumed wearing brightly coloured 'normal' dresses and, of more significance, trimmed bonnets.⁸⁹ Dress aside, however, she thought deeply about theological matters and attempted to clarify her understandings and pass them on in various publications, including *The Divine Master* which, by 1885, had run to eleven editions.

Felicia Skene's intellectual struggle with abstract concepts of faith, including the question of immortality encapsulated within this successful edition, indicates that she was capable of clearly defining theological ideas for readers who bought the book, presumably for their own spiritual enlightenment. Whether her readership included more women than men is not known, but the book was considered to be one of the most popular of her publications. Felicia Skene was unusual in her willingness to put pen to paper on religious issues, especially at a time when essays and sermons were the almost exclusive province of churchmen, not churchwomen, although, of course, *The Divine Master* was published anonymously. Opportunities to express her opinions on other religious issues, including the work of women within the church, came some years later when she was appointed editor of the Anglican High Church journal, the *Churchman's Companion*.

The Skenes spent less than three years in Leamington, during which time Felicia was lionised for her writing by local society. It was not an experience she enjoyed, or at least was willing to admit that she enjoyed. Her niece, Zoë, recalled occasions whilst shopping when people stopped to point out her aunt as a traveller and a writer, (anonymity was apparently no disguise). Felicia regarded it as "bad" being identified and regarded in public. As pleasant as life was, despite frequent visits to Oxford and new friends,⁹⁰ she still found life empty. Her biographer recorded, 'in her secret soul she longed for some congenial sphere of real work into which she might throw herself'.⁹¹

The calling to usefulness evidently was strong and was answered when, on one of his visits to Leamington, Felicia met Reverend Thomas Chamberlain. In addition to his religious duties, Chamberlain was also a writer. He was also close friend of her

⁸⁹ Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 94-5.

⁹⁰ Rickards notes Skene's friendships with Miss Isabel Percy, niece of the Duke of Northumberland, and Lady Somerville, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

cousin, Alexander Penrose Forbes,⁹² and a tireless parish priest. From Chamberlain she learned directly of his pioneering work in the slum areas of Oxford, the establishment of a religious community with the assistance of his cousin, Marian Hughes, and the refurbishment of the church of St. Thomas the Martyr.⁹³

Undoubtedly, an immediate rapport was established between Felicia Skene and Reverend Thomas Chamberlain, (1810-1892), but whether this admiration was mutual, or was based on Felicia's propensity for religious hero-worship, is difficult to assess. Rickards provides some delicate hints about the relationship suggesting that as a man with force of character and convictions, Chamberlain appealed to Felicia's generous nature. She wrote ambivalently, 'strength has a fascination for women, especially those of warm feelings and emotional temperament'.⁹⁴ Was she alluding here to Felicia Skene or to all women? Felicia left no direct evidence of her feelings except, perhaps, for her admiring descriptions of another working priest, "Mr. Chesterfield of St. Albans" who appears in her novel, *St. Albans, or, The Prisoners of Hope*, published in 1853. Skene's fictional description of this clergyman hero-figure bears a remarkable resemblance to the real Mr. Chamberlain of Thomas's.

Chamberlain certainly became Felicia's mentor in religious matters, and he encouraged her writing and orchestrated her eventual role as an editor. He was described as 'a man of striking appearance, strong personality, and decided uncompromising views' and Rickards asserts that he 'justified in his own person the title of Church Militant'.⁹⁵ Among the ritualistic practices Chamberlain introduced were daily communion, Eucharistic vestments, candles on the altar, choral celebrations, and parochial visiting, and he founded a Gregorian musical society. These practices would have certainly have appealed to Miss Skene, a self-confessed admirer of the Greek Orthodox tradition and a good singer herself. Chamberlain was also a man of energy and intellect.⁹⁶ He founded the *Englishman's Library* in which the teachings of High Churchmen, Paget, Gresley, and his own works, were published, and he edited *The Ecclesiastic* from 1846 to 1867, the *Churchman's Companion* from 1847 to 1862, and the *Oxford University Herald* from 1882 to 1892. He attracted men and women to his

⁹² See, *A Plea for Sisterhoods*, by the Right Rev. A. P. Forbes, D.C.L. Bishop of Brechin, Joseph Master & Co. London, 1848. Pusey House Pamphlet Collection No. 6247.

⁹³ A brief description of Thomas Chamberlain's work can be found in Peter F. Anson, *The Call of the Cloister: Religious Communities and Kindred Bodies in the Anglican Communion*, (2nd Revised Edition), SPCK, London, 1964, pp. 285-288. See also, F. Boase, *Modern English Biography*, Vol. IV, Supplement, F. Cass & Co, London, (1908), 1965 reprint, p. 631.

⁹⁴ Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁹⁶ Thomas Chamberlain published extensively, including hymns, memoirs, appeals, sermons, religious instruction. Most of his work was published by Joseph Masters & Co. London.

work, including Alexander Forbes who had served with him as a young curate, Reverend H.F. Jones, Prebendary Miller and later, the Reverend Algernon Simeon.⁹⁷

Between 1848 and 1850, Felicia Skene visited Oxford frequently to observe Chamberlain's parish work, and the work of a devoted group of women gathered around his cousin, Marian Hughes, who had taken a vow of celibacy before Dr. E.B. Pusey in 1841,⁹⁸ and who went on to found the Sisterhood of the Holy and Undivided Trinity in 1849.⁹⁹ Working for a community was an ideal which strongly attracted Miss Skene, as it had many other single women of her generation, including Florence Nightingale. Skene's association with the Sisterhood grew even stronger once her parents had decided to move to Oxford and her signature, together with Thomas Chamberlain's and Marian Hughes, is found on the original draft of the Instrument of Foundation of the Sisterhood which was signed on 5 February 1850, the Feast of St. Agnes. This indicated that under the direction of the Reverend Thomas Chamberlain, the sisters of Charity would devote themselves to the care of the poor in the parish of St. Thomas.¹⁰⁰ All this received the blessing of Dr. Pusey, but Felicia Skene resisted the temptation to join the sisterhood.

Pushing aside any thoughts of a religious calling or vocation, although never abandoning her devotion to the Church, particularly St. Thomas', Felicia Skene preferred to retain her liberty to write, to travel, and to entertain friends. Taking vows of obedience would have prevented her from leading an independent existence and, as her biographer explained, she needed to 'exercise her genius for friendship'. This was one of Felicia

97 Reverend Algernon Barrington Simeon was later the principle of St. Edward's School at which Felicia Skene taught, and he was left fifty pounds in her will. The Dowager, Lady Catherine Simeon, was also a friend. Two letters, copies sighted, dated July 1876 from Felicia Skene to Lady Simeon concerning church services and her visit to Oxford, are held in the Autograph Letter Collection, Harry Ransom Research Centre, The University of Texas at Austin.

98 Anson, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

99 Michael Hill has argued that 'the supporters of sisterhoods worked with an incipiently feminist conception of the role of women and insisted on the right of women to organize their own activities'. Michael Hill, *The Religious Order: The Role of Virtuoso Religion and its Legitimation in the Nineteenth Century Church of England*, Heinemann Education, London, 1973, p. 271. Martha Vicinus in her study, *Independent Women*, supports this view, but points out that 'High and low churchmen were deeply divided over the nature of women's religious orders' (p. 47). In her opinion, 'Anglican sisterhoods were one of the most important women's communities in the nineteenth century ... among the first to insist upon a woman's right to choose celibacy, to live communally, and to do meaningful work.' *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

100 Felicia Skene signed the Instrument as a witness. The Sisterhood of the Holy and Undivided Trinity was finally established under a Seal on 21 November 1861, signed by the Lord Bishop of Oxford; trustees were Sir Henry Wentworth Acland (Felicia's friend), Sir Frederick Lygon, and Walter Calverly Trevelyan. Felicia Skene did not sign the second document which broadened the scope of the Sisterhood's activities. According to the illuminated document, "The object of the Society is to instruct and protect young girls, to visit the poor and ignorant, to nurse in hospitals or otherwise and to pray for the preservation and increase of the true Faith, and by acts of mercy and charity to testify their love and obedience to our Lord and Saviour who had commanded us to love GOD above all things and our neighbours as ourselves." Archives of the Sisterhood of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, Pusey House Library, College of St. Cross, Oxford.

Skene's most marked characteristics; she had to be free to write her ideas, not only on philanthropic and social questions, but also on any others about which she wished to express herself, in fiction, history, biography, and essay. She also needed friendship. Rickards, who had access to her lost papers and letters, suggests that Felicia had been pressured to join the Sisterhood once Marian Hughes had left to join another sisterhood in Oxford as its Mother Superior. She states that for Felicia, 'old friends or new, were the constant interest and refreshment of her life. And hers was a mind that had not only great enjoyment, but a real need, of masculine as well as feminine society, which she could not have had if she had yielded to Mr. Chamberlain's persuasions'.¹⁰¹

The decision to move to Oxford made by James Skene in 1850, delighted Felicia since it brought her into an intellectual and ecclesiastical milieu which, by then, she knew was important to her. Oxford held out professional possibilities for writing and opportunities for philanthropic work. In opting for both, she chose wisely since each activity could usefully inform and stimulate the other. In time, her writing provided necessary funds for charitable works and, in turn, this provided her with valuable material which she often incorporated in articles and books. The Skenes, together with nieces, Zoë and Janie Skene, established themselves first at a house in Beaumont Street, and they later moved to Frewen Hall in the centre of the city of Oxford.¹⁰² The Skenes had the company of their close relatives, Lord and Lady Forbes, and their nephew, William Baillie Skene, (1838-1911) who was elected a Fellow of All Souls in 1864.¹⁰³

It was from this convenient base, notwithstanding her family duties, that Felicia threw herself into charitable work which included teaching at St. Edward's School, nursing the poor in the parish, working through the Penitentiary with prostitutes and at the Oxford Refuge with young girls judged at risk, and visiting the inmates of Oxford Gaol. Her life became increasingly full as she struggled to combine writing with outside charitable work, as well as tend to her ageing parents and growing nieces. Felicia Skene, like all women committed to causes, suffered from guilt and mental anguish, finding that there was never enough time to devote to her parents. The dutiful daughter 'reproached herself bitterly' for her neglect, torn by a desire as she was to be useful in the public sphere yet be attentive to her parents' needs. Women of Felicia's generation suffered from criticism and self-criticism for what contemporaries chose to call "the neglect of

¹⁰¹ Rickards, *op cit.*, p. 95.

¹⁰² Frewen Hall is now part of Brasenose College.

¹⁰³ William Baillie Skene (1838-1911) was the son of Patrick George Skene of Fife. In M. Jeanne Peterson's book, *Family, Love, and Work*, *op. cit.*, he has been confused with William Forbes Skene (1809-1892) who was Felicia Skene's brother, *c.f.* p. 27. William Forbes Skene never attended Christ Church, nor was he a Don. Personal communication between S. Rickard and M. Curthoys, Archivist, Christ Church College, Oxford, Jan. 1992

home".¹⁰⁴ Felicia was judged by her own biographer to have '[fallen] into the snare that often besets enthusiastic workers among the poor—of not giving due attention to home claims'.¹⁰⁵

The shaping and competing forces of a life already crowded with incidents and people were writing and philanthropy. For a genteel woman, these were acceptable pursuits which made Felicia Skene's known within Church and philanthropic circles, as well as outside in literary circles. She might have pleaded for anonymity but, through these mutual activities, the writer and philanthropist made her voice heard and her presence felt.

Making a Single, Professional Life

Rejecting the opportunity of joining an Anglican Sisterhood proved to be a turning point in Felicia Skene's life. From that time her life was filled with work which she considered to be useful and personally fulfilling. She asserted her independence from Thomas Chamberlain, but continued to assist him within the parish and in readying works for publication. Between 1847 and 1854—in addition to the works already cited—she published a work on church doctrine entitled *The Inheritance of Evil; or, the Consequence of Marrying a Deceased Wife's Sister*, another novel in two volumes, *The Tutor's Ward*, a collaborative and edited work with her cousin Alexander Penrose Forbes, *The Prisoners of Craigmacaire: A Story of the 46*, and a further religious work, *The Ministry of Consolation*.¹⁰⁶

In 1849, she had her first experience of nursing cholera sufferers within the parish bounds of St. Thomas which, because of its low-lying and unsanitary nature, was prone to disease.¹⁰⁷ According to Sir Henry Acland, then Regius Professor of Medicine,

¹⁰⁴ A significant element of the contemporary and pervasive "Woman Question", related directly to the question of usefulness and redundancy. Feminist historians have looked closely at the tensions which beset women like Felicia Skene. Martha Vicinus has a useful chapter, 'The Revolt Against Redundancy' in *Independent Women*, pp. 10-45. See also, Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, *op. cit.*, esp. 'Feminism and the Woman Question in Early Victorian England', pp. 18-53, and Jane Lewis's study, *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England*, Edward Elgar, London, 1991, which addresses the issue of women balancing family and home life with a commitment to philanthropy and social work.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 97-8.

¹⁰⁶ *The Inheritance of Evil; or, the Consequence of Marrying a Deceased Wife's Sister*, 1849, *The Tutor's Ward*, 1851, *The Prisoners of Craigmacaire: A Story of the 46*, 1852, *The Ministry of Consolation*, 1854. Full publication details in Bibliography.

¹⁰⁷ For a description of sanitation and public health measures taken in Oxford after the cholera epidemic of 1854, see *A History of the County of Oxford*, A. Crosley, (ed.), Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 238-9.

the parish was one of Oxford's 'black-spots' with the highest incidence of the disease, with the exception of the County Gaol. Felicia Skene's experience in nursing and consoling the dying was called upon in even greater measure in 1854 when Oxford was hit by new epidemics of cholera and smallpox. Her devotion and fearlessness was lauded in J.B. Atlay's *Memoir* of Sir Henry Wentworth Acland. Acland noted Skene's ability to organise and superintend a small band of women who assisted her in caring for the sick.¹⁰⁸ Her friendship with Acland lasted a lifetime and their mutual respect was built over many years.¹⁰⁹

Sir Henry used Felicia's editorial skills extensively. She assisted him in practical ways by correcting and commenting upon his writing, including one lecture he wrote on medical missions for the Edinburgh University, and another on the same subject for the Oxford University Junior Scientific Club.¹¹⁰ He also turned to her for advice on material given to W.E. Gladstone for an article which the 'Grand Old Man' was writing for the popular journal, *Good Words*.¹¹¹

Until the mid-1860's, Felicia lived with her parents at Frewen Hall. From there she was able to go by foot to the Oxford Refuge, the Oxford Gaol, the Female Penitentiary, St. Thomas's and Christ Church Cathedral. In 1862, Thomas Chamberlain relinquished his position as Editor of the *Churchman's Companion*, and passed this salaried position on to Felicia Skene who had been for many years his able, but unpaid, assistant. During this time, she learned a great deal about journal publication, and her editorial and writing skills paid off later when she decided to branch out and write for the more popular journals of the day.

The *Churchman's Companion* was a High Church journal published twelve times a year by Joseph Masters in London, each edition running to at least one hundred pages and costing sixpence. It had begun in 1847 and contained hagiographic portraits of Protestant saints, biblical lives, travel articles upon cathedrals and special localities, hymns, notes and queries, theological essays, poetry, discussion upon contemporary

¹⁰⁸ J.B. Atlay, *Sir Henry Wentworth Acland, Bart, K.C.B., F.R.S. Regius Professor of Medicine in the University of Oxford: A Memoir*, Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1903, p. 191-2.

¹⁰⁹ Felicia Skene was likewise a great friend of Sir Henry's wife, Sarah, and remained a friend of his daughter, Angela "Angie". In the surviving correspondence, there is clear evidence of friendship in Skene's advice to Acland on prayer, and there are letters to Angie which similarly reveals an exchange of warm sentiments and wise counsel. MS Acland, Duke Humphry Library, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

¹¹⁰ MS Acland, d. 89, fol. 215, August, 1889.

¹¹¹ Skene to Acland, March 23, 1885, MS Acland d. 68, fol. 164-5. In another letter dated May 16, 1898, Skene alluded to another piece Sir Henry was writing on which she had obviously worked. She wrote: 'If there is anything more that your humble Editor can do in the future, you know that you only have to command it'. In that letter she also referred to an article which she had written for *The Hospital* on prison food, MS Acland, d. 80, fol. 84-5.

issues, Reviews and Notices, letters to the Editor, and serial fiction. Little is known about the *Companion's* readership, subscription list, or publication links with Joseph Masters in London. All that is known for certain is that Masters specialised in religious publications and had been in business since 1829.¹¹²

On the fortieth anniversary of the journal, in 1867, Miss Skene addressed her readers:

As one of the oldest existing Church periodicals we now claim the increased support of all who desire to see the Faith of the Catholic Church of England still more widely extended, especially amongst that large middle class, which through neglect and indifference of past days has been so fatally estranged from her.¹¹³

Producing a journal so frequently, and to a standard which attracted the work of established as well as promising young writers, was a formidable task. Consider the logistics of the enterprise. Despatching copy to the printers, correcting, editing, proofing, and commissioning writers all took place in Oxford, whilst printing and distribution took place in London. Rapid turn around was required by the publisher and this demanded continuous effort from the editor who worked alone. Her writer's habits were disciplined. After visiting the Oxford gaol to meet discharged prisoners at seven in the morning, she attended Holy Communion. Then she attended to the individuals—'tramps, discharged prisoners, poor clients of some description', who visited her house.¹¹⁴ If she was free, she wrote from eleven in the morning until mid-afternoon. After an early dinner she would recommence writing until late. In letters there are frequent references to her working well into the night or rising early in the morning to complete corrections.¹¹⁵ In this respect, quite apart from payment, Skene was a consummate professional. Letters to William Blackwood reveal, for example, that her own articles submitted to *Blackwood's Magazine*, were usually corrected within twenty-four hours. In one letter dated 1892, written from Oxford, she thanked Blackwood's for sending her the proof of an article and responded: 'I can send it carefully revised to Edinburgh tomorrow'.¹¹⁶

¹¹² The only reference to Joseph Masters appears in *London Publishers & Printers, c. 1800-1870*, Philip A.H. Brown (ed.), British Library, 1982, p. 125. Master's publications appear in the *Publishers' Circular* lists. Despite much correspondence, I have been unable to discover more about the Company. It appears to have become defunct in 1885.

¹¹³ "From the Editor", *Churchman's Companion*, New Series, 1867.

¹¹⁴ Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 131-2.

¹¹⁵ Rickards noted, 'Often she [Skene] would sit up till the small hours of the morning, intent on her tales and novels, or on papers for Mr Chamberlain's Magazine'. *Op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹¹⁶ Skene to Blackwood, May 2, 1892. MS 4593, f. 141, *Blackwood's Archives*, National Library of Scotland.

Precisely how much income Felicia Skene earned from her work as editor is not known, although it is recorded that she used her salary to buy personal requisites and make donations to various charitable causes.¹¹⁷ This small income must surely have given her a considerable sense of independence. As editor, she remained anonymous but while working in her own right, she exercised a great deal of control over the contents of each issue, something which must have undoubtedly increased her sense of autonomy. She could, for example, accept or refuse manuscripts. In an interesting role reversal, or as an act of filial devotion, she accepted a number of articles from her brother George, Professor of Law at Glasgow University, who contributed one scholarly work entitled 'The History of the Jews in the Middle Ages', which was evidently 'much admired'.¹¹⁸

Serial fiction was an important element in this, as in most, popular journals. Felicia Skene published novice writers, including the first published work of Mary Arnold, then an eighteen-year-old, later the celebrated novelist, Mrs Humphry Ward. Her tale, *A Westmoreland Story*, came out in the *Churchman's Companion* in three chapters between July and September, 1870.¹¹⁹ Felicia Skene helped her to write this story and Miss Arnold, as a new author, was 'proud ... and pleased' to have received 'a few pounds' for her efforts.¹²⁰ Felicia Skene remained in contact and watched Mary Ward develop as a novelist and continued to offer her criticism. Mrs Ward was delighted, for example, that Felicia Skene liked her novel, *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, and noted that Miss Skene's letter of praise 'was a great joy to me'. Mary Ward admitted that as a young woman, she had read Felicia Skene's novel, *Hidden Depths*, but suggested that at the time, she had understood 'very little of what such a subject [prostitution and seduction] meant'.¹²¹

Felicia also included her own fiction and one of stories, *Light Out of Darkness*, appears in the same series. This tale which deals with bereavement and recalls the death of her own father, contains a description of a woman who bears a notably close

¹¹⁷ Despite an intensive search, Felicia Skene's bank records have disappeared. She banked with the Old Bank in Oxford which was absorbed by the Westminster Group.

¹¹⁸ I was not able to find this article but Rickards refers to it, *op. cit.*, p. 179. Forty unindexed volumes of the *Churchman's Companion* are held in the British Library.

¹¹⁹ 'A Westmoreland Story', [Mary Arnold], *The Churchman's Companion*, Third Series, Vol. II, July, pp. 45-57, Vol. VIII August, pp. 121-140, Vol IX September, pp. 187-195, 1870.

¹²⁰ 'A Westmoreland Story', involves a heroine who nurses the sick during a cholera epidemic. Felicia Skene remained a friend and admirer of Mary Ward who, in turn, held her in some awe. In Mary Ward's tribute which appears in Rickards biography, she recalled that she 'used to look at St. Thomas's Church from the railway with reverence because she [Felicia Skene] went there'. Felicia Skene was at her mother, Julia Arnold's, bedside often during her long illness and was at her deathbed in 1888. Rickards, *op. cit.*, p.133. John Sutherland makes a number of references to Felicia Skene in his biography, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian Pre-eminent Edwardian*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990.

¹²¹ Mrs Humphry Ward in Rickards, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-4.

resemblance to herself. There are numerous autobiographical references including training the voice for opera and living on the Continent when young. ‘Ferrars’, the hero, ‘decided upon using the press as the medium of the philanthropic work’, very like the author herself. He speaks of his ‘Aunt Madeline’, a woman ‘with great powers of mind and brilliant accomplishments [who had] given up society and devoted herself to religion’:

She is now nearly fifty, and for the last twenty years she has given herself wholly to the task of succouring the vilest and most degraded of the human race, whether to men or women, though naturally her opportunities have lain most amongst the outcasts of her own sex,—her one principle has been to spend her energies entirely on those whom all others have abandoned.¹²²

In 1862, the same year as her appointment as editor, Felicia Skene’s beloved mother died, followed two years later by her father. Work, writing and philanthropy, may have given her some comfort but, as Skene’s biographer noted, ‘Life had to be taken up alone under new conditions, with that sense of desolation which always comes with the realisation that the older generation with its protecting love has passed away’.¹²³ Her brothers found her the small house, pictured below, just around the corner from Frewen Hall. At the age of forty-three, Felicia Skene found the opportunity to begin a new life, alone, though surrounded by friends.



Plate 6: Miss Skene’s House, New Inn Hall Street, Oxford.¹²⁴

- ¹²² [F.M.F. Skene], ‘Light Out of Darkness’, *Churchman’s Companion*, Third Series, August 1871, Chapters XVIII to Chapter XX, p. 101.
- ¹²³ Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 186.
- ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, Introduction, p. viii. This photograph by a Miss E. Venables, was taken with Angie Acland’s camera.

Moving from a spacious and dignified residence which once housed the Prince of Wales during his university years to a compact and gardenless abode, probably took some adjustment. Felicia, unlike others in her generation, chose not to live with her married relatives although she was a particularly well-loved aunt to nieces and nephews. She chose independence and lived modestly on a small legacy from her father and the rewards of her writing. The house remained her home until her death.

Felicia Skene had two servants living with her and, of course, her dogs. The house became a centre for callers of all kinds and it was said that she never locked the front door; those in need of help could enter for assistance and shelter. It was a transit point for those leaving Oxford Gaol to walk to the major thoroughfares of the city. She never refused aid to her callers, and her house was never burgled. Before moving in, Skene reported in a letter that her house was renovated:

My home is being set to rights while I am absent, and amongst other things the kitchen floor had to be renewed. When they took up the old boards they found that a horse had been buried there! It must have lain there for hundreds of years, for my house is I believe about two hundred years old.¹²⁵

It was from this house that Felicia produced the rest of her written work. From here she undertook her regular visits to the Oxford Penitentiary and other prisons and it was from here that she wrote the book *Hidden Depths* which, in 1866, created a controversy and exposed many of her 'gentle' readers to some unpleasant truths discussed in detail later. From New Inn Hall Street she travelled abroad and made at least two exploratory visits to France, once in 1870 shortly before *l'année douloureuse* as the years 1870 and 1871 were known in France, and again in 1873, to inspect the French Reformatory of St Michel in Paris. In two signed articles published in *Good Words*, she expressed favourable opinions on the French system of reclaiming prostitutes in homes run by Roman Catholic nuns. She witnessed the aftermath of the 'disastrous course of the Franco-Prussian war which flooded Paris with sick and wounded, [cared for by] the sister of St. Michel'.¹²⁶

From New Inn Hall Street she produced a number of articles about the tramps who passed through the city of Oxford on their way to the Midlands of England.¹²⁷ She also produced works of fiction which addressed topics such as capital punishment, imprisonment, and prison reform. She tackled the question of suicide, seduction, ghosts,

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹²⁶ F.M.F. Skene, 'The French Reformatory of St. Michel', *Good Words*, 1870, pp. 65-73. F.M.F. Skene, 'St. Michel during the Year of Pain', *Good Words*, 1873, pp. 144-150.

¹²⁷ F.M.F. Skene, 'The Autobiography of a Tramp', *Belgravia*, Vol. 81, 1893, pp. 167-179.

and wrote memoirs of illustrious bishops. She walked to the first meetings of the Charity Organisation Society which was established in Oxford early in 1869. She entertained her friends and relations, prestigious University figures such as Benjamin Jowett who came to her for advice on ways of curtailing the nocturnal visits of undergraduates to numerous Oxford's brothels, and she wrote romantic fiction for the American market. Her home was a haven—a base from which to conduct her social work and philanthropy, and it also became a place to write in peace.

Felicia Skene's words opened this biographical portrait. She wrote, 'I have always mentally lived alone'. Being alone, as we have learned, is a recurring theme in her writing and is echoed in this conclusion. From this period in her life, freed from parental responsibilities, Felicia Skene tested her own philosophy and went out into the world.

Chapter III

“Hesba Stretton” - (Sarah Smith) - Shropshire Lass - (1832-1911)

I have lived ten years longer than I fixed for myself when I was young, and thought life would not be worth living after fifty. The last ten years have been more interesting, more peaceful, and I think more useful than any other ten years.¹

Hesba Stretton wrote this introspective observation in her log book on 27 July 1892, the anniversary of her sixtieth birthday. Coming from the pen of a woman who controlled her personal emotions and guarded her privacy, this quiet celebration of a successful life and career is one of the few entries in which the writer employed the personal pronoun “I”. Hesba Stretton more typically wrote of “we”, referring to experiences shared with her confidante and sister, Elizabeth. Usually there are short, cryptic notes, brisk *aide-memoires*, disparaging remarks, a hint of gossip, and the occasional flash of self-deprecating humour. This particular reflection on ageing, usefulness, and living an ‘interesting’ life is compelling in its candid simplicity and provides one of the rare self-conscious statements made by this complex and reserved woman.

Unlike many evangelicals of her generation,² Hesba Stretton was never a diligent diarist and eschewed using the private pages of her log books for daily soul-searching. Following her unusual birthday reverie, for example, she reverts to her predominant style and notes, ‘Went up to London about American copyright of “Half Brothers” ... We arranged about “Half Brothers” satisfactorily’.³ There are hints of self-reproach, but in the privacy of her diary she was more inclined to judge others’ actions than her own. She

¹ Hesba Stretton’s Log Book, 27 July 1892, MS 5556/1-9, Shropshire Local Studies Library, Shrewsbury, England. The expression, ‘Log Book’, used by Hesba Stretton to describe her diaries, may have originated from her time as a teacher in Shrewsbury. Log Books were used on a daily basis to record school activities and attendance. All subsequent references will take the short title, *Log Books*.

² See, for example, Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1976, esp. Chapter 1, ‘Vital Religion’.

³ 28 July 1892, *Log Books*. “Half Brothers”, was published first in the *Sunday Magazine* in 1892. It was the leading serial published throughout 1892. The narrative begins on Page 1, Volume 21, (New Series), and concludes on Page 802. The owner of the American copyright edition was Cassell & Company, New York.

often refers to the incomplete state of her log books rather than to any evangelical fear of being found wanting on the Day of Judgement.

From reading the log book entries, it is clear that the writer's stronger literary powers were reserved for income-producing popular fiction rather than for introspective and self-conscious diarising.⁴ In an entry for May 1867, for example, she scribbled: 'I am ashamed of this Log Book', and again in March, 1870, she wrote, 'Dates wrong here'. These entries review events and register her irritation at failures to keep a more regular record. Indeed, there are many frustrating lapses; glimpses of Hesba Stretton's public and private life often appear in entries so enigmatic that they elude the biographer. These lapses, however, often reflected the peaks of activity in Hesba Stretton's working and social life and if, by her own admission, there are a few uncertain daily dates, these are of less significance when we look expansively over the productive years of the writer's life.

Some events are recorded with detail. Hesba Stretton noted her business dealings carefully; royalties and payments—always important to her—are dated with day and month. Other entries recording family visits or domestic crises—births and deaths, problems with servants and, later, intractable landladies—are indicated briefly often only by month; these were obviously written up during lulls in her writing schedule, on rare inactive days, and during holidays. She kept her log books sporadically from 1856 until the mid-1890s.⁵ The first log books cover the years 1856 to 1859 and contain little more than dates and the titles of articles despatched, returned, and accepted. The first recorded acceptance of one of Hesba Stretton's articles, by Charles Dickens in 1859, reads: "'Lucky Leg" sent to *Household Words*, Feb. 21. Accepted March 19th. Recv'd from Mr. Wills £5-5-0, March 31st.' This was followed by another entry, "'The Postmaster's Daughter" sent to *All the Year Round*, April 24th', and a few months later by the note, 'Heard from Mr Wills and received £8-8-0 for P.M.D. [Post Master's Daughter], Sept. 16th.' The article subsequently appeared in *All The Year Round* on November 5, 1859. Dickens was proprietor of both these journals and William Henry Wills was his financial

⁴ There is a growing feminist historiography on women's diary writing. In particular, I have referred to recent studies by Harriet Blodgett, *Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen's Private Diaries*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1988, Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1988, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1985, Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Female Imagination*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1975. H.G.C. Matthew's biographical study, *Gladstone: 1809-1874*, Oxford University Press, 1986, provides instructive examples of Gladstone's intensely evangelical habit of diary writing.

⁵ I am indebted to J.S. Bratton, whose article, 'Hesba Stretton's Journalism', drew my attention to Hesba Stretton's log books in Shrewsbury. *Victorian Periodicals Review*, XII, 2, 1979, pp. 60-70.

partner and helpful subeditor.⁶ Dickens was to become one of Miss Stretton's most important literary mentors.

As a writer of evangelical fiction, Hesba Stretton has been linked inevitably with an earlier generation of women writers, particularly Hannah More, Mrs. Trimmer, and Mrs. Sherwood whose tract and didactic fiction was most popular and widely disseminated in the first years of the nineteenth-century.⁷ Hesba Stretton followed these evangelical literary predecessors and, to the extent that she used her writing to appeal to the moral conscience of her readers, she was the inheritor of both a womanly tradition and a distinctive literary form. Her writing was deeply religious and extremely popular, but thereafter most personal and literary similarities disappear. Hesba Stretton was not only unafraid to write explicitly about the social ills she observed nor to focus directly upon contemporary moral problems, but she also provided perceptive insights into the complex causes of juvenile crime. Her ability to invoke an understanding of juvenile crime, often generated by a combination of poverty and neglect, was one of her particular strengths.

Some critics, recognising Hesba Stretton's accuracy, complained that she wrote upon subjects best kept from innocent readers. One critical review in *The Athenaeum*, (probably written by Geraldine Jewsbury), of Hesba Stretton's three-part tale, *The King's Servants*, objected to Miss Stretton's reference to "fallen girls" — 'We object strongly to this specific form of wretchedness being revealed to young creatures who ought not to have their minds darkened by the shadow of such knowledge before the mind is fitted to receive it'.⁸ Hesba Stretton's mode of writing was such that, as this critic recognised, her narrative prose was open to multiple interpretation. The critic of the *Hereford Times* praised the same tale as one which 'the youngest child can understand the precepts and morals it teaches'.⁹ Hesba Stretton's ability to address readers of different ages and degrees of sophistication was thus exceptional. Above all, she was realistic and wrote with what E.S. Nesbitt praised as 'pathetic simplicity - a grand gift in writing'.¹⁰ Any tendency towards nostalgia for country life was always tempered by her

⁶ See, J. Don Vann, 'All the Year Round', in *British Literary Magazines: The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913*, Edited by Alvin Sullivan, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1983, pp. 11-14

⁷ These writers, and Hesba Stretton's writing, has been discussed by J.S. Bratton in *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction*, Croom Helm, London, 1987, and M.N. Cutts, *Ministering Angels: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Writing for Children*, Five Owls Press, Hertfordshire, 1979. See also, M.N. Cutts, *Mrs Sherwood and her Books for Children*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1976.

⁸ *The Athenaeum*, Dec. 13, 1873.

⁹ *Hereford Times*, Review, *The King's Servants*, June 6, 1874.

¹⁰ From a letter to Ada Breakwell, April 6, 1884, quoted by Doris Langley Moore in *E. Nesbit: A Biography*, 1967

direct knowledge of the harsh realities of rural poverty. As literary historian N.M. Cutts has observed: '[Hesba Stretton] did not confine herself to one problem per book, nor sentimentalize for a hundred pages over a single forlorn child. Every child in her tales is part of a whole society; every problem part of a wide-scale national problem, often a universal problem'.¹¹

Unlike her predecessors, Miss Stretton was a harsh social critic who refused to subscribe to any Evangelical school of thought which held that individuals were solely responsible for their own destitution. She was angered by many of the social inequalities inherent in mid-Victorian England and refused to sit quietly and pray for reform. In social investigation, philanthropy and writing, Hesba Stretton can be viewed as an extramural activist and reformer. She did not mount the political hustings—as a woman she had no political voice nor vote—and as far as we know she did not agitate publicly for the vote, but she used the respectable means of evangelical fiction, non-fiction, and letters to the editors of important newspapers as surrogate political hustings. From here she could legitimately criticise and expose the inadequacies of the law, church and government, as well as the crimes of exploiters and abusers.

As a writer, social investigator and philanthropist, Hesba Stretton was unafraid to tackle issues which contemporaries euphemistically called "social evils". These she took up in popular journals including *Good Words*, *Leisure Hour*, and *Sunday At Home*, all of which had impressive circulation figures.¹² The Religious Tract Society's Annual Report of 1879 reported that the *Leisure Hour* and *Sunday At Home*, 'addressed not far short of a million readers monthly'.¹³ Aware of this huge constituency, Hesba Stretton used her writing to reach the widest reading public. By the time she had reached her sixtieth birthday, she had many powerful admirers amongst the millions familiar with her writings, and in all respects had travelled a long way from the early days she spent growing up in Wellington in Shropshire.

¹¹ Cutts, *Ministering Angels*, p. 133.

¹² For a complete list of articles and journals, see Stretton's *Bibliography*, this Thesis.

¹³ This figure is taken from an article by Rosemary Scott, 'The Sunday Periodical: Sunday At Home' in *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. XXV, No. 4, Winter, 1992, p. 160.

Family Circle

Hesba Stretton was born in Wellington, a small market town outside Shrewsbury in the county of Shropshire, in 1832, the year of the first Reform Act. She was christened Sarah although she often referred to herself as Sara, and was the fourth child in a family of eight children of whom only five survived to adulthood.¹⁴ Her Methodist family occupied the respectable ranks of lower middle-class Shropshire society. Her father, Benjamin Smith (1793-1878), has been described as a 'sturdy pillar of Shropshire non-conformity', and indeed he was a lay preacher at Wellington's Methodist chapel¹⁵ and, importantly, a bookseller and small-time printer.¹⁶ Hesba's mother, Anne, (née Bakewell) (1798-1842), came from a family of small landholders and died in 1842 soon after the deaths of her infant sons, William and Charles. Her death had a profound affect upon the family, and particularly upon her daughter Sara, then aged ten. In her writing, Hesba, like many Victorians, returned constantly to the theme of death, but her *leitmotiv* more often than not was the loss of a loved and loving mother and protector.

Benjamin Smith was a strict disciplinarian, a task-master, a booklover and, one suspects, a poor manager. According to Hesba's account, he was a kind but exacting father who devoted a great deal of his time to work and rather less to the emotional needs of his growing family. In 1893, he was described by one of Hesba's journalist-biographers, as having belonged to 'that great middle-class of the last generation whose industry and integrity ... made the commerce and the moral strength of the English nation of today'.¹⁷ After Anne Smith's death, Benjamin assumed a new role as respectable widower and sole parent. Readers today may assume from the description of his 'strict economy and stern habits of self-denial in his daily wants' that Hesba Stretton, her sisters and young brother, bereft of their mother's love, missed the outward signs of paternal love. This is not to say that Benjamin did not love his daughter—he was inordinately proud of her literary achievements—but he was pre-occupied and not inclined to give compliments. Hesba's mother gave her children individual attention and she was noted

¹⁴ Genealogical details of Hesba Stretton's family are contained in the appendix. Five children survived. Hesba's brothers, James, William and Charles, died in infancy. Her only surviving brother, Benjamin, was born in 1834, died in 1916.

¹⁵ Captain Ronald Webb wrote a short, private memorial about his great-aunt and noted that Benjamin Smith had preached on the Methodist Circuit. (Timetables noting this were sent to family members in Kansas). Captain R. Webb to the Archivist, Country Record Office, Shrewsbury, letter Ref. 921/4, Sept. 14, 1958. (Henceforth, Webb).

¹⁶ Brian Alderson, 'Tracts, rewards and fairies: The Victorian Contribution to Children's Literature', *Essays in the History of Publishing in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the House of Longman 1724-1974*, Edited by Asa Briggs, Longman, London, 1974, p. 268.

¹⁷ 'Miss Stretton at Home', *Sunday At Home*, 1893, p. 402. [Unsigned].

for her domestic skills and prayerful piety. It was she who was largely responsible for instilling a love of home and a simple, spiritual philosophy in the mind of her daughter.

Notwithstanding these particular maternal gifts, the Bakewell family's pedigree must have also been important to Hesba Stretton. In a rare interview given in 1894 to Hulda Friederichs, a journalist for the popular journal, *The Young Woman*,¹⁸ she chose to reveal that her mother's family could be traced back as far as 1158, and that the founder of the family, the rector of Bakewell, was made Chancellor to King Henry II. Hesba Stretton reportedly commented: 'through six hundred years, through nineteen generations, the Bakewell family has been distinguished by brain-power above the average'.¹⁹

This extraordinary remark indicates both Hesba's attitude towards the importance of maternal heritage, and the value she placed on inherited intelligence. In another account, she credited her mother as the person who taught her the real meaning of pity.²⁰ Anne Smith remained a strong and formative influence upon the memory of the writer. As Wesleyans, the Smith's typically prayed together, read the Bible, learned Watt's and Wesley's Catechisms, sang Watts' *Divine Songs* and recited the psalms at home. Attendance at religious service was an important weekly event, although here again, Hesba Stretton suggested that she learned more from her mother than the local Wesleyan preacher. Evidently she did not suffer from what Charles Dickens called the *ennui* of the Sabbath, and Sundays were 'very happy days' at home.

The children, Hannah, Elizabeth, Sara, Benjamin and Anne spent what, in retrospect, each regarded as precious time with their mother.²¹ That closeness was confirmed in 1863 in the creation of Sarah's memorable *nom-de-plume*, "Hesba", from the siblings' initials and the taking "Stretton" as her surname, after the village of Stretton in which they had spent holidays. From accounts prepared by memorialists and Hesba's younger relatives, and by looking directly into Hesba Stretton's novels and tales, images of her early days emerge. Hesba was an observant witness and her writing drew heavily from experience. Writing from experience she regarded as an essential part of writing honestly.²² Descriptions of places in Shropshire and events related to her youth and her family appear in tales like *The Children of Cloverly* and *Fern's Hollow*, and in articles

¹⁸ Hulda Friederichs had worked for another prominent activist and publisher, W.T. Stead.

¹⁹ Hulda Friedrichs, 'Hesba Stretton At Home', *The Young Woman: A Monthly Journal and Review*, No. 22, July 1894, p. 330.

²⁰ 'Hesba Stretton', *Seed Time and Harvest*, Religious Tract Society, London, Dec. 1911, p. 11.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²² Hesba Stretton advised aspiring writers in *Girls' Realm* in 1906, not to rush into print - "one must write from experience". Cutts, *Ministering Angels*, p. 131.

such as 'A Summer Day on the Wrekin'.²³ In *Fern's Hollow*, for example, which she wrote in 1862-3, she used her knowledge of the Shropshire collieries to expose the encroachment of mining into common lands and some coalmasters' neglect of basic safety regulations. (Her uncle, John Smith of Lebotswood, owned a small coal mine and she may well have been critical of his, or his neighbours' practices). Printing was also a subject about which Hesba Stretton knew more than most since her home was part of a busy printery.

Benjamin Smith began his career as an apprentice printer in 1808 with F. Houlston & Son, a small Wellington company which specialized in printing religious sermons, tracts, books and, later, children's books. He rose to become a master printer with the company until the demands of the Post Office overtook those of the printery. Houlston's was a successful provincial enterprise which, according to Cutts, 'owed its early success to its being from the beginning, like Hatchard's of London, in the Evangelical camp.' One of their most famous authors for children was Mrs. Sherwood who published with Houlston's as well as Hatchard and Darton. Mrs. Sherwood's best-selling evangelical tale for children, published first in 1814, *The History of Little Henry and His Bearer*, a didactic tale set in India, was sold to Houlston's for five pounds.²⁴ As a journeyman printer, Benjamin was probably involved in the first printings of Mrs. Sherwood's books. The family evangelical printing connection was of vital importance later in Hesba Stretton's literary career; it provided contacts in the publishing sphere and allowed her to claim some continuity with the past not only in terms of religious belief but also of her knowledge of the printing and publishing industry.

The Smith family lived in premises which served both as a home and a shop. Number 14, New Street, Wellington, was the printery, bookshop and later, the local post office. It was a centre of printing activity in the town and Hesba Stretton in one of her tales, *Enoch Roden's Training*,²⁵ later drew upon her knowledge of the printing process which she had observed in her father's workshop. The shop, like many provincial bookshops, was also an informal meeting place and remained an agency for Houlston's. According to one account of Hesba's life, 'all the intellectual people of the neighbourhood came to converse with the Smith's ... discussions were carried on, embracing every

²³ *Fern's Hollow*, (1864) and *The Children of Cloverly*, (1865), were published by the Religious Tract Society. 'A Summer's Day in the Wrekin', appeared in *The Leisure Hour* in 1863. Full publication details are in Stretton's bibliography. The Wrekin is a strange humped hill which rises 1334 feet above sea level. Hesba loved to walk the Wrekin. According to lore and geological survey, it is the oldest uplifted land in England.

²⁴ Cutts, *Mrs. Sherwood and her Books for Children*, p. 24. In this study, Cutts provides an interesting account of Houlston's expansion into a successful provincial publishing company.

²⁵ Hesba Stretton, *Enoch Roden's Training*, Religious Tract Society, London, 1865.

possible religious and political discussion'.²⁶ Benjamin Smith allowed his children to play with books before they could read, and gave them free access to the reading matter he stocked when they were older. In this way, Hesba Stretton always had access to a range of literature and learned to read widely, including the novels of Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë. Importantly, such access allowed Hesba the freedom to form her own opinions.

Although the illustration below is clearly not an illustration of Benjamin Smith—Frances Houlston moved his business to London in 1829 after a disastrous fire in the Wellington premises in 1824—this interesting woodcut depicts the interior of Houlston's shop. It is likely that Smith's shop looked very like this one.

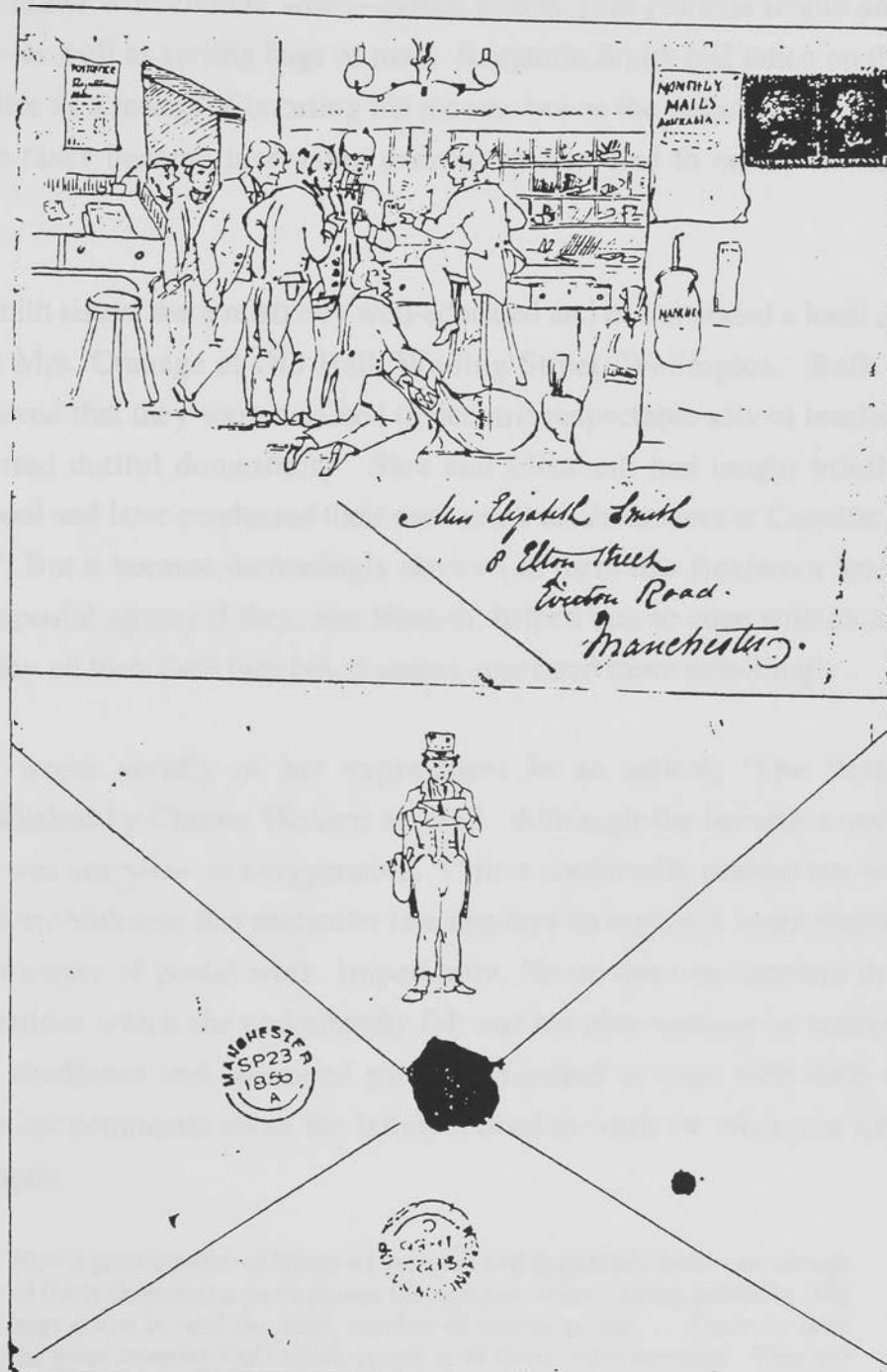


Plate 7: Customers in Houlston's Bookshop.²⁷

²⁶ 'Hesba Stretton', *Seed Time & Harvest*, RTS, 1911, p. 11.

²⁷ This engraving is taken from *Houlston's Series of Tracts*, c. 1835. Shrewsbury Public Library, Shropshire.

One important image of the Smith's Wellington Post Office does survive, however, shown in Plate 8 below, drawn in 1856 by Hesba Stretton's brother-in-law, John Halphead Smith who painted china and porcelain for the Coalport pottery.²⁸



The Post Office featured prominently in Hesba Stretton's earliest articles written for Charles Dickens' journal, *All The Year Round*. This entertaining 'back-of-an-

²⁸ Plate 8. The Post Office at Wellington. The drawing bears postmarks, Wellington, September 22, 1856, and Manchester, September 1856. The man holding the envelope on the reverse is a surprised postman. This image is reduced from its original size. File BS 91, Captain R. Webb. Shropshire Local Studies Library, Shrewsbury, England.

envelope' pen sketch shows the scene in Benjamin Smith's Post Office with all its activity and bustle. The envelope was addressed to Elizabeth (Lizzie), Hesba's sister, when she was working as a governess in Manchester. Hesba Stretton, or Sarah Smith as she was still known then, and her sisters Hannah and Elizabeth, all worked in the post office assisting their father with counter work—postal orders, post-restante letters and a small savings bank—as well as sorting bags of mail. Benjamin Smith had taken on the agency of the post office as a means of boosting his income but as the volume of mail increased each year, the tasks became increasing onerous and he had to enlist the help of his daughters.

The Smith sisters were relatively well-educated and had attended a local school for girls run by a Mrs. Cranage at Old Hall, Watling Street, Wellington. Both Sara and Elizabeth believed that they were destined to become respectable school teachers, while Hannah preferred dutiful domesticity. Sara and Elizabeth had taught briefly at Mrs Cranage's school and later conducted their own small establishment at Caradoc Lodge in All Stretton.²⁹ But it became increasingly obvious to them that Benjamin Smith would only retain the postal agency if they, and Hannah, helped him to cope with an increasing work load. They all took their turn but, it seems, more and more unwillingly.

Hesba wrote vividly of her experiences in an article, 'The Postmaster's Daughter', published by Charles Dickens in 1859. Although she became a noted writer of fiction, she was not *given* to exaggeration. Critics continually praised her writing for its realism and truthfulness; this particular tale displays an insider's acute understanding of the arduous nature of postal work. Importantly, Hesba does not attempt to hide the personal frustrations which she undoubtedly felt and her observations on women's stoic perseverance, obedience and unlimited patience required to cope with their work are pointed, as are her comments about the family's need to work for what, she hints, were exploitative wages:

Now a great number of letters are received and despatched here—an average of thirty thousand a week passes through our office; during each day fifty bags come in, and the same number of course go out. ... There is, first, the great morning mail which comes in at three in the morning. Then our own bags for the sub-offices have to be made up and despatched which occupies us till six o'clock. The letter-office must be opened to the public by seven, and the money-order office at ten. At eleven, there is a mail from our country town, and one to be sent to London. We go on all day, until our great nightwork begins which lasts until after ten, when we send out our greatest number of bags.

²⁹ Information provided by a descendant of Hesba Stretton, Alicia A. Walker, in an unpublished M.A. thesis, 'Alone in London: Nineteenth-Century Street Children in Novels by Charles Dickens and Hesba Stretton', Emporia State University, Kansas, July 1977, p. 120.

It is a rather weary thing to be chained to the office-counter all the days of my youth ... I applied myself diligently to my new duties as post-office clerk which are not unsuited to women in a town like ours, as they require the unspeculative perseverance, obedience, and the patience under petty annoyances, which many women possess, or to which they are trained.

We did not shrink from the monotony and confinement ... and it is evident that if we and our father could give our whole time and energy for 90*l.* a year without expectation of a promotion, we were willing to work for much lower a wage.³⁰

As a family, or "The Crew" as she named them, the Smith's found themselves, *in Hesba's words*, 'chained' to the post office with batches of mail arriving throughout the day and night. However, in another article written for Dickens in 1863, Hesba romanticised living 'above the shop'. The opening paragraph from 'A Provincial Post Office', tells a different story and provides a more positive, if nostalgic, view:

There is this difference between receiving an official installation into any situation, and being born to it, that while the former is merely the work-a-day service of life, the latter is so lit up with all the associations of childhood and youth, that all the most matter-of-fact business becomes invested with something of the interest and prestige of a birthright. Thus postal service is almost an inheritance ... for my earliest recollections are connected with the daily routine of office work, carried on in the room which was partly devoted to nursery employments and amusements.³¹

In time, Hesba, despite her loyalty, came to loathe this 'birthright'. Even the patience which, she argued, women were trained to employ in their duties, failed her. She was sharp enough with one customer in 1861 to attract a complaint and receive an official reprimand from postal authorities. Anticipating a further visit from the postal inspector, and mindful of father's her position, she noted in her log book in 1861 that she must remember to 'mind p's and q's'.³² The two examples, however, indicate some of the ways that, as a writer, Hesba drew from direct experience. The difficult as well as good days provided her with excellent material since they could all be used as "facts on a thread of fiction", a title she used for one of her later tales.³³ Between 1859 and 1869, Hesba managed to write other articles for *All the Year Round*, involving the post office including 'Lost in the Post Office', and 'The Travelling Post Office'.³⁴ One of her book-length tales, *Two Secrets*, also relied upon her direct knowledge of postal operations.³⁵

³⁰ [Hesba Stretton], 'The Postmaster's Daughter', *All the Year Round*, Vol II, Nov. 5, 1859, pp. 37-44.

³¹ [Hesba Stretton], 'A Provincial Post-Office', *All the Year Round*, Vol. IX, Feb. 28, 1863, p. 12.

³² *Log book*, Aug. 10, 1861.

³³ Hesba Stretton, "Facts on a Thread of Fiction": *In Prison and Out*, RTS, London, 1880.

³⁴ Hesba Stretton, 'The Travelling Post-Office', Christmas Number, *All the Year Round*, *Mugby Junction*, Dec. 8, 1866, and, [Hesba Stretton], 'Lost in the Post Office', *All the Year Round*, 1869.

³⁵ Walker, 'Alone in London', *loc. cit.*, p. 127.

Benjamin Smith had no automatic right to a pension but in 1862, after many representations, he was finally granted a small pension under an Act of Grace. However, he was forced to retire immediately. The Wellington Post Office was moved to new premises - 'Miss Bullock's House' - to be run by a young postmaster and his wife, Mr and Mrs. Green. According to Hesba's great-nephew, Mrs Green then 'did a large share of the work'.³⁶ Benjamin Smith's difficulties at the hands of the Lords of the Treasury gave Hesba first hand experience of the petty meanesses of bureacracy and hardened her stance on the need for social justice and compassionate care for the elderly. Like so many, her father must have feared ending up in the workhouse. As a faithful servant of the Methodist cause, all his spare cash had been donated to the church and he neglected to provide adequately for his own retirement, a fact which preyed on Hesba's mind and undoubtedly fuelled her ambitions for independence. His dilemma was reflected later in Hesba's book, *The King's Servants*, in which the Transome's, a respectable and hard-working couple, ended their days miserably in the workhouse.³⁷

In her article, 'A Provincial Post Office', written when Benjamin had retired, she used his experience: 'My father had rendered efficient service to our neighbourhood for nearly forty years, but his age—bordering on seventy—and his increasing infirmities, no longer permitted him to perform his duties'.³⁸ Clearly, Benjamin needed his daughters help to retain his own job. After retirement, Benjamin Smith relied upon Hannah, his most dutiful of daughters, to look after him, and they both lived sparingly in New Street on his meagre pension. He became frailer and devoted his remaining days, in Hesba's words, to go 'begging' for the church in Wellington.

During her last years in Wellington, it is evident from short entries in the log books as well as in her published articles, that Hesba Stretton experienced enormous frustrations. At that time, she was trying to combine a fledgling literary career and long hours of post office work with the shared care of an ageing father. There are frequent log book entries which refer to the uneventful days: 'Profound stagnation. Crew in despair at the prolonged calm'.³⁹ She also referred to the fact that at thirty, Lizzie had no prospects of work or marriage. They both evidently found local society tedious and, judging from one note written in 1860, were resented and censured for their skills. Hesba wrote:

Lizzie and Sara went to a regular Wellington party, where they were regarded as natural curiosities in the animal kingdom. Solemn dancing

³⁶ Captain R. Webb, letter, Sept. 14, 1958, Ref. 921/4, Shropshire Record Office.

³⁷ Hesba Stretton, *The King's Servants*, RTS, 1879.

³⁸ 'A Provincial Post-Office', *loc. cit.*, p. 12.

³⁹ *Log book*, Dec. 4, 1860.

with intervals of stupidity was the entertainment of the evening. Acted the word "Plaintiff" and won the admiration of all the men and the spleen of the women, one of whom spoke of "cheek", and not making oneself conspicuous.⁴⁰

Hesba noted sardonically on New Year's Day in 1861, 'The crew looking forward to a very monotonous twelve months'.⁴¹ Wellington, despite its variety of churches and chapels, was a small, inward-looking community which provided little or no intellectual stimulation for a woman who wished for more than sermons and small works of charity. Some years later in 1869, having made a short visit back from London to see her father, she wrote in her log book, 'Came home for two or three days; I have been too long at Stretton; people get tired of one another'.⁴² Such was her epitaph on the town.

Taking Leave

In 1862, Hesba had few prospects as a teacher, showed no desire to become a governess like her sister Lizzie, and, importantly, did not wish to remain a burden to her father.⁴³ As we know, she had no desire to marry and, unlike many women, never regarded marriage as a way of achieving economic security. (In her narratives, wives and mothers were often depicted as abandoned by husbands. In two novels, *Under The Old Roof* and *The Doctor's Dilemma*, women's inheritances were almost lost through the unscrupulous acts of cruel husbands).⁴⁴ Although working for her father ensured that she had paid her way, Hesba still managed to suffer from pangs of guilt at the prospect of leaving home. She was, however, prepared to leave Hannah, her older and domestically-inclined sister, with Benjamin's care and perhaps it was this, rather than the fact of leaving home, which played on her mind.

Once she became a successful writer with an income, Hesba took on the expense of caring for and educating her nieces and nephews who came to stay with her in London, often for extended periods. (Her brother Benjamin's daughter, Alice Annie, came from Canada to finish her schooling. Hesba also arranged for her sister Anne's

⁴⁰ Log book, Dec. 13, 1860.

⁴¹ Log book, Jan. 1, 1861.

⁴² Log book, May 22, 1869.

⁴³ Harriet Schupf has commented that 'traditionally, the options open to the middle-class spinster without monetary resources were commonly limited to governessing or authorship'. Schupf, 'Single Women and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century England: The Case of Mary Carpenter', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 17, March 1974, p. 301

⁴⁴ Hesba Stretton, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, H.S. King, London, 1872, Hesba Stretton, *Under the Old Roof*, RTS, 1882.

daughter, her namesake niece, Hesba Dora (b. 1860) to receive tutoring, and later taught her great nephew Ronald Webb at her home and paid for his private education at St. Paul's School.)⁴⁵ As a maiden aunt, Hesba had genuine affection for her nieces and nephews, but practical help of this kind was also a way of making up for her absence. Despite her frustration with domestic life, and eventual abandonment of Wellington as a home base, it is important to stress that Hesba Stretton retained a profound belief in the power of the family to provide emotional and physical support. Family remains a constant theme in her professional writing and the sense of solidarity she gained from her own family is gauged from her description of the Smiths as "The Crew". From personal experience, however, she knew that a functioning family did not have to ~~reflect~~ the sort of ideal so beloved of Victorian novelists and artists.

Ideal fictional families were a favourite of many of Hesba's literary contemporaries, including Charlotte Maria Tucker whose life will be examined in the following chapter. One of Tucker's earliest tales, *The Giant Killer*, promoted the Robys, a fictionally-perfect and gender-stereotyped family with a devoted, domesticated mother, a busy yet loving father, and a brood of respectful and obedient offspring. Two young guests with the unlikely names of Constantine and Adolphus, are introduced to the Roby children, Aleck, Bertha and Laura. They then meet:

Mr. Roby ... a tall, pale gentleman, with a stoop, a high forehead and thoughtful air which at once impressed the two little boys with an idea that a very learned scholar was before them. Mrs Roby, on the contrary, was stout and rather short, with a bright merry glance in her dark eyes, to which the dimples in her cheeks corresponded there was a kindness in the press of her hand, and a cheerful animation about her whole manner that made her guests feel at home ...⁴⁶

Such scenes of familial perfection are found rarely in Hesba Stretton's tales. Families are often broken, separated by death, or work, or prison. In one of Hesba's best-selling books, *Little Meg's Children*, Little Meg is left in charge of her infant brothers, one a babe in arms, after her mother dies of tuberculosis. Her father, a habitually drunk merchant seaman is away at sea, and on her own Meg tries to eke out an existence for her now-parentless family. She and her brother Robbie, (the infant dies), eventually discovered by a local doctor, are taken in by a widow who has lost her own daughter. In Hesba's grim narratives, aunts, uncles or grandparents, siblings, childless couples, foster parents and other unrelated but interested individuals such as Mrs

⁴⁵ In his handwritten reminiscence, Webb stated, 'Both my great-aunts Sara[h] and Elizabeth were very kind to me and taught me well so that I enjoyed being with them', Webb, June 30, 1964, p. 17.

⁴⁶ A.L.O.E. [Charlotte Maria Tucker], *The Giant Killer, or, the Battle Which All Must Fight*, T. Nelson & Sons, London, 1890 edition, p. 13. (First Published 1853).

Blossom, the kindly widow in *Little Meg's Children*, or Daniel, the churchwarden in *Jessica's First Prayer*, provide care and Christian love in place of immediate family and next-of-kin. Hesba's young waifs—Jessica, Cassy, Little Meg, and Tom Haslam—are shown as victims of a heartless society until rescued by individuals willing to act in *loco parentis*, bringing the waifs into an extended family.⁴⁷ It was due in great part to Hesba Stretton's writing and petitioning for legislation that the state eventually accepted the protective role entailed in the passage of the Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, known as 'The Children's Charter', adopted in 1889.⁴⁸ In Hesba's view, however, legislation could protect only nominally, and she believed that benevolent societies never replaced the loss of individual love bestowed by a caring Christian parent.

While Hesba believed firmly in family as a socially-supportive unit, a strong counter theme also recurred in her writing. She was at pains to emphasise independence and the ability of all individuals to earn an honest and respectable living. While Post Office work and teaching furnished her with some small income which went into the family coffers, her modest success and payments earned from writing for popular journals, provided another impetus which changed the direction of her life. By 1862, her mind was made up to pursue a literary and philanthropic career away from home. By so doing, she simultaneously avoided the fate of becoming a 'home daughter' and increased the prospects of improving her social and literary status. To earn a living as a writer and to live independently seemed an impossibility in Stretton, Wellington or Shrewbury. As soon as she knew for certain from examining her receipts that she could just support herself by writing, Hesba abandoned ship in 1863 to begin a new life in the city of Manchester. She joined forces with her sister Lizzie, who had taken work there as a day governess for the Scottish writer and clergyman, George MacDonald.⁴⁹ At the age of thirty-one, Hesba Stretton had struck out for herself.

Independence and radical views were associated with Hesba Stretton's literary evangelicalism from the beginning. Her willingness to expose the darker sides of life in

⁴⁷ Dr. Barnardo reported to the Social Science Congress held in Liverpool in 1876 that at a conservative estimate there were probably more than 30,000 homeless and destitute children in London alone. Anne Allen & Arthur Morton, *This is Your Child: The Story of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1961, p. 22. (Hesba Stretton was a supporter of Dr. Barnardo's work in London and wrote on his behalf.)

⁴⁸ For a history of this legislation and the individuals involved, see George K. Behlmer, 'The Child Protection Movement in England, 1860-1890', Unpublished PhD thesis, Stanford University, 1977.

⁴⁹ George MacDonald (1824-1905) was an unorthodox Congregational Minister who, having offended some of his congregation, left London for Manchester and turned to literature full time in 1853. MacDonald's fiction was didactic, successful, as well as sensational. Lizzie Smith, Hesba's sister, worked for his family during 1862-3 but was unhappy in his employment. His connections with London publishers may have been helpful for Hesba Stretton.

the city and the country brought her fame, raised consciousness and led to reforms, as did the work of other nineteenth-century evangelicals.⁵⁰ How her individual views were formed, however, remains uncertain. Whether amongst the books bought and sold there were any Radical essays or pamphlets available in Smith's shop is difficult to assess. Certainly, in her 1859 article describing the Post Office-cum-bookshop, she suggested that her father stocked only religious tracts and nostrums:

He orders nothing for the shop but patent medicines and books from the Tract Society. We have pills of every description ... As for religious books, the house is crammed with them, and very few persons care to buy them, except to give away, or the clergymen and ministers who never pay for some months, and then want discount.⁵¹

From her log books, however, we know that Benjamin Smith stocked many of the more popular journals which she and her sisters read avidly. They scoured all the current religious and popular journals for Hesba's articles. For instance, in one log book entry made in 1862, it was noted, 'Hannah read the newspaper at night, and found an extract from Sarah's article on an emigrant ship; much pleased'.⁵² The article was one which Hesba had written for Dickens's *All the Year Round* entitled 'Aboard an Emigrant Ship', published in April 1862. On another occasion, she was extremely annoyed to discover that one of her pieces on the religious revival published in an unidentified religious journal was printed without any payment to her.⁵³ From a brief comment Hesba Stretton made many years later about her own political views and Republicanism in a letter dated 1886,⁵⁴ one suspects that, given the locality and the times, radical and Chartist literature may have also circulated in Smith's shop, if not through Benjamin Smith's hands, then through the hands of some of his customers. Her Republican views may have also led her to worship in the Congregational church.

Shrewsbury had been a well-known centre for evangelical non-conformity as well as centre of Established religion from the middle of the eighteenth century.⁵⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge gave his first sermons there as a Unitarian minister,⁵⁶ as did one of England's most renowned preachers of the Evangelical Revival, the Reverend Rowland

⁵⁰ For a useful, if now, somewhat dated study of the link between nineteenth-century social reform and evangelicalism, see Kathleen Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action: An Appraisal of their Social Work*, Geoffrey Bles Ltd., London, 1962.

⁵¹ 'The Postmaster's Daughter', *All the Year Round*, Nov. 1863, p. 38.

⁵² *Log book*, Sept 25, 1862.

⁵³ Cutts, *Ministering Angels*, p. 123 citing letter from Capt. Webb (unseen).

⁵⁴ Letter from Hesba Stretton to Mrs Pattison, 16 April 1886, University of London Library. This letter is discussed below.

⁵⁵ A.D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914*, Longman, London, 1976, p. 150.

⁵⁶ Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions*, Penguin, London, 1989, pp. 177-181.

Hill.⁵⁷ The collieries and Staffordshire potteries were on the doorstep and Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester which had been major centres of midlands Chartist agitation, were within easy reach. As one obituarist noted, young Hesba lived in a home in which discussion was encouraged; around her the 'world was seething with unrest' with Chartism in England and revolutionary movements on the Continent.⁵⁸ In print, Thomas Carlyle was thundering and Charles Kingsley preached social justice and Christianity. But it must be said that Hesba Stretton's attitudes towards the excesses and evils of materialism and industrial capitalism were as much a product of her own observations as the material she read.

Some of her views were exposed in *David Lloyd's Last Will* which was the leading serial published in the *Leisure Hour* in 1869. This novel provides a perfect example of the skilful ways in which Hesba was able to produce a convincing story that deals with the foibles of human nature supported on a base of factual material. The story is set in 1862 at the height of distress caused by the Lancashire Cotton famine. Hesba used this setting to deal with serious questions concerning unemployment, hunger, greed and profit-grabbing landlords, but within the novel Hesba carefully recalled many of the sights she had witnessed on a visit she had made to Blackburn in December 1862.⁵⁹ Her portraits of unemployed cotton workers are both realistic and sympathetic and some of her scenes were reproduced by the engraver, S.W. Swain, whose plates illustrated every instalment. Three of his engravings shown overleaf, present striking images of the effects of the mill closures. Readers were confronted with the progressive images of long-term unemployment. First, there are the respectable workers waiting for news, then the hungry and destitute unemployed crowding the soup kitchens run by well-fed charity workers, followed by desperate mothers and children begging on the streets of Manchester. The sad advance of economic depression was brought home with dramatic impact by both the writer and illustrator.⁶⁰

Hesba's visit in 1862 was undertaken as an investigative writer to find facts for an article she was to write for the journal, *Temple Bar*. In this she reported on the Blackburn Sewing Schools established by the local Church of England Association to provide temporary sewing work for unmarried women thrown out of work by the cotton blockade. Before the cotton famine, these women had been employed as factory hands in the mills. Within the article, she reported in detail on other relief programs organised by

⁵⁷ Cutts, *Mrs. Sherwood and Her Books*, p. 24.

⁵⁸ 'Hesba Stretton', *Seed Time & Harvest*, RTS, 1911, p. 11.

⁵⁹ Hesba Stretton, 'David Lloyd's Last Will', *Leisure Hour*, Vols. 888-913 Jan-June, 1869, pp. 1-404.

⁶⁰ Plates 9, 10, & 11 are the first-page illustrations used for 'David Lloyd's Last Will', *Leisure Hour*, 1869.

various philanthropic groups and described the sense of desolation in the once-bustling cotton town.

THE LEISURE HOUR

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—Cooper.



BAD NEWS FOR MANCHESTER.

DAVID LLOYD'S LAST WILL.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER I.—THE DAYS OF THE COTTON FAMINE.

At the date of the commencement of this story, in October, 1862, the hard times, which were inaugurated for Lancashire and its great cotton metropolis Manchester by the fall of Fort Sumter and the proclamation of the blockade of the Southern ports, had been endured long enough to try the most sanguine spirits, and to test the most trusting hearts.

No. 838.—JANUARY 2, 1869.

Since the beginning of the year, which had now no more than eight or nine wintry weeks in store, the dire distress and poverty had been steadily widening and deepening from week to week, like the slowly rising waters of a deluge. In prospect of the winter, which already made its coming felt in the increasing sharpness of the frosts, the whole population of the cotton district shuddered with a universal heart-quake. Already, during this last fortnight of October, there had been, in six only out of the twenty-eight unions of the distressed districts, no

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Plate 9. "Bad News from Manchester". First page illustration taken from 'David Lloyd's Last Will, Leisure Hour, January 1869, page 1.

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HARRY'S RETURN IN MANCHESTER.

DAVID LLOYD'S LAST WILL.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER XXVII.—FIVE SHILLINGS IN COPPER.

With blanched face and unsteady gait Clough walked back to the Heath House, closely followed—pursued, as it seemed to him—by a knot of men carrying among them a hurdle taken from the railway embankment, upon which was borne the corpse of the man under whose roof he had dwelt for more than twelve months. He felt sick and confused, and from

minute to minute fell into the fancy that he was still lurking behind the gate at the crossing, and saw the engine stealing swiftly upon the absorbed money-seeker. It was even with great difficulty that he could refrain from uttering a shout of warning; yet as soon as his fancy attained that point, there came with it the condemning consciousness that it was too late, and that the guilt of blood rested upon his soul. He went on his way doggedly, not daring to look behind at the burden borne after him; and before long he came upon the print of the old man's foot-

PRICE ONE PENNY.

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THE SOUP-KITCHEN.

DAVID LLOYD'S LAST WILL.

CHAPTER XXIII.—MR. LLOYD IN SEARCH OF HIS DESTINY.

The debt owing to Mr. Lloyd by the town-missionary, James Trevor, was one of long standing, and it was very probable he would still be unable to pay it. Mr. Lloyd put off from day to day his journey to Blackburn in pursuit of him, hoping that he might be coming over to pay a visit to his family, who were still living in Manchester, and thereby save him the expense of his railway fare. He felt

no scruple about taking his full share of the lavish expenditure of his brother's house, which at the same time provoked his anger; a silent and covert anger a hundredfold more dangerous than more open wrath. He was always a smooth-tongued, soft-spoken man away from his own home, so that poor Mab suspected nothing of his smothered indignation, and continued her lavish endeavours to please her rich uncle. His hopes as to the return of the city-missionary were doomed to disappointment, and having almost completed what other business he had

No. 894.—FEBRUARY 12, 1869.

H

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Included were snatches of conversations she had held with some of the men and women forced to accept charity. She drew extensively on her recollections when writing *David Lloyd's Last Will*, and one passage in particular grabbed the critics' attention for its solemn and graphic qualities:

— a procession with neither music nor banners—stretched along the street, gliding patiently and mournfully towards some unseen point. It was more melancholy and depressing than a funeral, and the faces of the men were as sad as those of mourners. A policeman who was passing told Mr. Lloyd, in answer to his inquiry, that these were the starving operatives waiting to go in turn before the committee of relief, and that those who were near the end would not get in before late evening. "These were hard times", said the policeman.⁶¹

David Lloyd's Last Will came out in book form in late 1869 and was reviewed favourably. *The Nonconformist* said that Hesba had pictured some of the scenes, 'with great power and produced a very effective story whose incidents arise out of the difficulties and pressure of a time of suffering which has certainly had no parallel in the modern history of this country'.⁶² Stretton's realism impressed the *Spectator's* critic who noted that 'the arrangements of the Relief Committees and the aspect and the endurance of the poor are graphically described'.⁶³ Had these critics read *Temple Bar* years earlier in March 1863, they may have recalled Hesba Stretton's article in which she described the cotton town's famine-stricken streets. Her novel simply drew upon her notes and, to an extent, her Wesleyan religion. At the time, in 1862, she wrote, 'we had to confront this great misery of unfamiliar penury and destitution, suffered by a people who hitherto have scorned and turned aside the outstretched hand of Charity'.⁶⁴

Methodism had taken great hold in the Midlands, particularly amongst working people like Benjamin Smith. Some orthodox Anglicans regarded the religious movement amongst the lower-middle classes as having revolutionary potential, setting non-conformists against the Established church.⁶⁵ As the daughter of a tradesman and lay-preacher, Hesba was naturally exposed to the strengths of religious conviction and to

⁶¹ Hesba Stretton, 'David Lloyd's Last Will, RTS, London, 1869, p. 98.

⁶² *The Nonconformist*, (no date), 1869. This cutting was found among other cuttings without dates in the Shropshire Country Record Office in File 928/1.

⁶³ Review, *The Spectator*, Dec. 18, 1869, Hesba Stretton, *David Lloyd's Last Will*.

⁶⁴ [Hesba Stretton], 'The Blackburn Sewing-Schools', *Temple Bar*, Vol. VII, March 1863, pp. 339-348, (p.339).

⁶⁵ See Gilbert, 'Church and Chapel in denominational relationship', *Religion and Society*, Chapter 7. E.P. Thompson formed an alternative view in his classic attack on Methodism in his study, *The Making of the English Working Class*. He argued that Methodism was a form of religious control which induced quietism and a compliant workforce.

alternative and radical opinions expressed in conversation and print. It is likely then, that although young, the writings of middle-class radicals were available to her.⁶⁶ As a young woman with a highly developed social conscience, she could not have been immune from accounts published in journals and newspapers. Despite his strictness in domestic matters and religious observance, her father never restricted Hesba's reading.⁶⁷ Any hint of political radicalism, however, was always downplayed by publishers who preferred to dress the writer in a garb of apolitical saintliness.

If radical speakers were not easily accessible to respectable, single women in Shrewsbury and Wellington, Hesba Stretton found ample opportunities for respectable 'sermon-tasting' a term she used to describe her visits to many of the churches and chapels in her district. She went to listen to local preachers who regularly addressed mixed congregations, and she took the time to seek out visiting lecturers whom she hoped would inspire her. Few managed to do so. As a discriminating and discerning listener, she was often disappointed. Hesba recorded her thoughts frankly on speakers' varying abilities. Having attended one lecture in Wellington in 1860, she wrote disparagingly about the lecturer and his purported topic. From her disapproving description of his dress, the lecturer was clearly a man of High Church leanings:

[Attended] lecture on Food at the Schools; lecturer an exquisite clergyman, curled hair, as much indication of a mustache as becomes his priestly character; massive rings, and hands much displayed; Lecture complete rubbish. ⁶⁸

On another occasion in the same year, she recorded:

Went to St. Aklund's schoolroom and heard a terribly prosy lecture from a pious baronet with mustaches [sic] who railed at Job's wife, poor woman! ⁶⁹

Conversely, she was able to take inspiration from other speakers she heard. In 1860, a year evidently devoted to 'sermon-tasting', she found that a Mr Woodward who had preached at Hadley, a near-by town, had given her 'a leading idea for a chapter in the big-book'. The 'big-book' she was then working on and referred to in her log book as "Rhoda", eventually came out years later, in 1867, with a new title, *The Clives of Burcott*. Throughout 1861 she was working on the manuscript and tried portions of it on the family — 'a fresh chapter of "Rhoda" to read after work', she noted in February,

⁶⁶ Did she, for example, read the *Northern Star*? Her logbooks provide no clues.

⁶⁷ Doreen Rosman argues that many Evangelicals, including Wesleyans, were often less restrictive in their reading than has often been suggested. Doreen M. Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, Croom Helm, 1984.

⁶⁸ *Log book*, July 4, 1860.

⁶⁹ *Log book*, Feb 26, 1861.

and on May 4, 1861 she triumphantly announced, “‘Rhoda’ finished’. She submitted the manuscript to Chapman and Hall who took six months to reject it as well as another story which she had submitted for publication in the all-important Christmas edition of *All the Year Round*. She was disconsolate and noted in the log book:

A day of unmitigated misfortunes. Letter from Mr Wills; Chapman and Hall decline publishing “Rhoda”; second story not accepted for Xmas number.⁷⁰

Manchester and London - Making a Mark

Moving to Manchester to join her sister Lizzie, proved to be a new but tough beginning for Hesba Stretton, now a published writer complete with pseudonym. She and her sister rented dingy furnished digs in Rose Street. For years to come, the sisters endured a series of unsatisfactory lodgings. According to Hesba’s log book, many landladies were mean and dishonest. Blankets were often thin, heating inadequate, bed bugs were not uncommon, rent was occasionally in dispute, and other lodgers were querulous. Hesba and Lizzie stayed for three years in Manchester and managed to live together harmoniously, a state which continued throughout their lives. Lizzie worked as a day governess and Hesba worked at her writing, although she taught Dr. Alexander McLaren’s children for a few months in 1866, and gave Bible classes at the Union Chapel. Hesba apparently admired the preaching of Dr. McLaren, a Scottish Baptist who was one of the few preachers she did admire. Others she admired included the Reverend William Gaskell and the Congregationalist, George Macdonald. According to an entry in her log book, after listening to one Macdonald’s ‘remarkable sermons’, she was so moved that she could not sleep after it.⁷¹ Moves in Manchester were frequent and letters note at least three different addresses.⁷² She obviously had an argument with one landlord since she wrote, ‘Resolved ... never to tell any lodging house people that they have bugs in their houses’.⁷³

Hesba was able to write from first hand experience about lodgers and landladies. Charles Dickens invited her to write an article for *Mrs Lirriper’s Legacy*, the 1864 Christmas edition of *All The Year Round*, and she submitted to him a slightly macabre tale about a deranged woman in an attic. (Mad women in attics were prevalent in

⁷⁰ Log book, Nov. 29, 1861. ‘Rhoda’, after some re-writing, emerged as *The Clives of Burcott*, in 1867.

⁷¹ Log book, Jan. 14, 1870. William Gaskell was the husband of the novelist, Elizabeth Gaskell.

⁷² Cutts, *Ministering Angels*, p. 123.

⁷³ Log book, Sept. 10, 1865.

nineteenth-century novels and the theme was popularized in Charlotte Brontë's novel, *Jane Eyre*.)⁷⁴ Hesba's article entitled, 'Another Past Lodger Relates Certain Passages to Her Husband' introduced the dishevelled figure of Mrs Vernon, (an opium addict it is later revealed), who suffered from a 'protracted and seemingly hopeless malady' and had shut herself up in an attic. The room had been 'padded throughout ... so that no sound of her wild ravings could be heard, and no glimpse of her face could be seen'.⁷⁵ The macabre was cleverly woven into a romance and the tale was set in the Shropshire countryside. Hesba wrote other tales about landladies and lodgers, including one published in 1878 for the Religious Tract Society entitled, *Mrs Burton's Best Bedroom and Other Stories*, but this, unlike the one she wrote for Dickens, was no bizarre tale.

From Manchester, freed from the duties of the Post Office, Hesba produced full-length tales, articles and serials and was extremely productive. She succeeded in having published *The Children of Cloverly*, *Enoch Roden's Training*, *The Fishers of Derbyhaven*, *The Clives of Burcot*, *David Lloyd's Last Will*, *Pilgrim Street: A Manchester Tale*, *Paul's Courtship*, and her highly successful tale *Jessica's First Prayer*. *Pilgrim Street: A Manchester Tale* is filled with descriptions of the city and its buildings, particularly the Manchester Assize Court in which the young hero, Tom Haslam, waits for his errant brother. Pilgrim Street is the setting of Tom's home, a cellar, which he shared with other street children.⁷⁶ Manchester was the city in which Hesba Stretton was first alerted to the enormous problem of homelessness. She and Lizzie attended a sermon at which the preacher spoke of children hired out as professional beggars and in disbelief she challenged the speaker to show her such sights in Manchester to prove his statements.⁷⁷ This he did, and from that time onwards Hesba's principle crusade was on behalf of homeless children. She toured city slums in Manchester, Liverpool and London to gather evidence much of which ended up, unadorned, in her fiction.

After three years in Manchester and a short six month sojourn in France, Hesba and Lizzie moved to London. The sojourn was a diversion induced by an offer made to Lizzie of a teaching post at a school near Calais. From hints made in correspondence, it is clear that Lizzie had experienced difficulties with continuity of employment and thought that with fluent French she would enhance her qualifications. At one point in 1867, the

⁷⁴ For a theoretical and critical analysis of the 'madwoman' figure, see Sandra M. Gilbert & Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1979. Elaine Showalter, in an earlier study, refers to the long literary tradition which refers to incarcerated mad women in *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, Virago, London, 1978, pp. 119-20.

⁷⁵ Hesba Stretton, 'Another Past Lodger Relates Certain Passages to Her Husband', in *Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy* by Charles Dickens, Chapman & Hall, London, 1864, pp. 198-208.

⁷⁶ Hesba Stretton, *Pilgrim Street: A Manchester Tale*, RTS, 1867, p. 19.

⁷⁷ Walker, *Alone in London*, p. 136.

sisters contemplated opening a small school in France.⁷⁸ Despite, her experience, Lizzie's situation never really improved. In 1869, Hesba wrote to a friend, 'Lizzie has no situation and it is that which makes us so unsettled. I suppose you do not know of any one who wants a morning governess.'⁷⁹ The experience in France did, nevertheless, provide Hesba with plenty of material.⁸⁰ Finding suitable accommodation proved to be as difficult in France as it was in Manchester and at one point Hesba and Lizzie sought temporary refuge in a convent for ten shillings a week. The experience of living in a Roman Catholic convent was, in Hesba's words, 'truly impossible'.⁸¹ The Mother Superior refused to allow them out and in desperation, they sought sanctuary with a Professor and his family in Honfleur.

Living in France proved to be neither as romantic nor as cheap as they had imagined. In later years, Hesba and Lizzie revisited the Continent and enjoyed the experience of travel but Hesba never abandoned her scornful opinion of the French. In her article, 'Ten Years A Nun', published by *The Argosy* in 1867, she adopted the first-person narrator's voice and used her own and her sister's experience in an anti-Roman Catholic tale about a Mother Superior who attempted to defraud a postulant of her inheritance.⁸² As might be expected from a mid-Victorian English traveller, xenophobia, or more precisely, Francophobia, was much in evidence.⁸³ She began:

You wish to hear in full detail an account of my sojourn and adventure in a French Convent ... I went to France, as you know, against the wishes of my family and friends, having accepted a situation in a school here as English teacher. It is enough to say about the school that no decent English girl could have stayed, so utter was the dirt, discomfort, and barbarism which pervaded it. I was compelled to leave it, but I was extremely reluctant to quit France without accomplishing my object, which was to perfect myself in the language.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Hesba wrote in the *Log book*, on May 4 1867, 'We have looked over two houses with the idea of living here [in France] and taking in pupils'.

⁷⁹ ALS, Hesba Stretton to Mrs Priestley of Accrington, Oct. 2, 1869. Fawcett Library MS Collection, City of London Polytechnic, London.

⁸⁰ For example, Hesba Stretton, 'Half an Hour's Walk in Normandy', *The Argosy*, Vol. 5, 1867-8, p. 426-430.

⁸¹ *Log book*, date unclear, but probably early 1867.

⁸² Anti-convent novels were popular. Charles Mudie, the intensely religious proprietor of Mudie's Circulating Library, is credited with promoting novels of this genre which lauded Protestantism and displayed anti-Catholic prejudice and he used his library to foster his own religious beliefs. In the novels he promoted, 'there was an obvious prepossession in favor [sic] of Protestantism', which proved extremely popular with readers. Guinevere L. Griest, *Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel*, David & Charles, London, p. 128-9.

⁸³ Bernard Porter has written an instructive and entertaining article on the subject of British Victorian travellers in 'The Victorians and Europe', *History Today*, Vol. 42, Jan.1992, pp. 16-22.

⁸⁴ Hesba Stretton, 'Ten Years a Nun', *The Argosy*, Vol. 5, 1867-8, pp. 36-48, (p.36).

At it transpired, Lizzie failed to become fluent in French.⁸⁵ Reading between the lines, it seems that Hesba's decision to accompany her sister to France was made at a time when her books were beginning to attract a great deal of attention in the press and it was considered by her family and friends illtimed. For Hesba, however, the decision to accompany her sister was of far more importance. As if justifying her actions, she wrote triumphantly in her log book in March 1867 that being away from London made no difference: 'Everyone *here* knows who we are'.⁸⁶ She was referring mainly to the expatriats in Honfleur and Calais who read reviews in the English newspapers, but she included the French dentist who provided her with uncomfortable dentures. Some of her pain was removed, however, by his saying that she should 'have a place next to Lord Byron in the next world'. Hesba regarded this as 'a marvellous compliment'.⁸⁷

Without comment, Hesba noted that she had received press cuttings of notices for *The Clives of Burcot* published by Tinsley's, from the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Church and State Review*.⁸⁸ The *Pall Mall Gazette* was kind, stating that, "'The Clives of Burcot" appears to us to be a work above the average of novels below the first class ... there are occasional finer touches in the book ... which seem to prove a capability of producing something much better by-and-by'.⁸⁹

Still in France, Hesba received the reviews of *Paul's Courtship*, her second novel. The melodramatic plot revolved around the themes of inheritance, forgery, and personal honour and involved a jilted, woman-hating young man, Dr. Paul Lockley, an ageing poetess, Clarissa Aspen, Lockley's scheming sister, Mrs. McGraf, the heroine, Doris Arnold as well as a host of subordinate characters. As always, the critics were divided. Those in favour including the *Imperial Review*, which thought the novel was 'pleasanter to read than to criticize' and 'deserving very much praise'.⁹⁰ The *Illustrated London News* 'detected symptoms of a hand which can sketch with graphic power'.⁹¹ Those against were less charitable. The *Athenaeum* thought that 'the whole story [was] so foolish' that they could not recommend it to readers.⁹² The *Morning Post* found it 'a remarkably uncomfortable novel ... all its sentiment is spasmodic, all its action is

⁸⁵ In December 1867, after their return to London, Hesba engaged a French teacher, Monsieur Clerc, to continue the language lessons. *Log book*, Dec. 1 1867.

⁸⁶ *Log book*, March 16, 1867.

⁸⁷ Webb, p. 9, citing notes in *Log book*, May 17, 1867.

⁸⁸ *Log book*, March 16 and 23, 1867.

⁸⁹ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 March 1867, pp. 10-11.

⁹⁰ The *Imperial Review*, 8 June 1867.

⁹¹ *Illustrated London News*, 20 June 1867.

⁹² The *Althenaeum*, 15 June, 1867.

strained, and the persons concerned are puppets'.⁹³ The *Daily Times* had some sage advice for the novelist, which she heeded:

A lady who can write as Miss Stretton does may yet produce something of no ordinary excellence providing she guards against the temptation of furnishing novels for the market rather than books for the study table or the library shelf. ... She has germs of originality ... yet she sometimes sins against taste. ... Let Miss Stretton avoid indulging in this fantastic and false style of writing, and she will please the impartial critic as well as the uncultured reader.⁹⁴

The important point to emphasise here is that this novel, whether judged satisfactory or not, was reviewed widely with the result that Hesba Stretton's name became increasingly well-known.⁹⁵ Whereas in the past she had submitted unsolicited manuscripts to publishers in the hope of the "glory of publication", now the tables were turned and it was she who was solicited for manuscripts. This experience gave her the necessary confidence to arrange her own writing schedules, often away from the publishing metropolis.⁹⁶ Within a remarkably few years of striking out on her own, her work was receiving attention and her writing was developing a recognisable style. Novel writing for adults was never her most successful *metier* although she did have a number of successes. Her literary "voice" was strongest when it realistically expressed situations in every-day life.

On returning to London in November 1867, the sisters again endured a series of unsatisfactory lodgings but subsequently found better accommodation in houses in Bayswater, Epping and Clapham, all away from the city but within easy reach of London's publishing centre in Fleet Street and Paternoster Row. In the mid-1860s, Hesba's publishers included Charles Dickens, Richard Bentley, William Tinsley, Charles Wood, H.S. King, and the Religious Tract Society. As she passed through London on her return from France, she noted visits to Samuel Manning, editor of the Religious Tract Society (and a distant cousin by marriage), Mr. Wills, and Charles W. Wood.⁹⁷ Now she moved in new circles which included influential publishers and philanthropists, all of whom recognised her as a writer with growing popular appeal, and pre-eminently, as the writer of *Jessica's First Prayer*.

⁹³ The *Morning Post*, 27 Aug. 1867.

⁹⁴ The *Daily Times*, June 13, 1867.

⁹⁵ *Paul's Courtship* was also reviewed in 1867 in the *Saturday Review* and the *Spectator*. I am grateful to Monica Correa Fryckstedt for providing this information from her own research.

⁹⁶ J.S. Bratton, in her article, 'Hesba Stretton's Journalism', makes this point and states that by 1868, Hesba Stretton 'had graduated from aspiring journalist to established author and dictated her own terms'. *Loc. cit.*, pp. 68-9.

⁹⁷ *Log book*, Nov. 28-9, 1867.

Friendships and Networks

Jessica's First Prayer, which proved to be Hesba Stretton's most successful and popular tale, was released in mid-1866 by instalment in the Religious Tract Society's popular weekly, *Sunday At Home*. Hesba's professional association with the Religious Tract Society had commenced with the publication of her juvenile fiction, *Fern's Hollow*, *The Children of Cloverley*, and *Enoch Roden's Training*. These were advertised with illustrations by the Society in pre-Christmas editions of *The Publishers' Circular*, the leading weekly journal of the publishing and bookselling trade. *The Children of Cloverley* was advertised for sale at two shillings with cloth boards and engravings, or two shillings and sixpence with extra boards and gilt edges. The tale was promoted in 1865 as having been written 'By the Author of *'Fern's Hollow'* and *'Enoch Roden's Training'*', a sure sign that the author's work was well-known enough to be promoted in this oblique fashion.⁹⁸ Coincidentally, *Fern's Hollow* had been advertised in April that year, under the publications of the Religious Tract Society with one of Charlotte Maria Tucker's books, *Our Sympathizing High Priest: Meditations on the Daily Sorrows of the Saviour* by A.L.O.E.⁹⁹

Hesba Stretton's earlier writing for Dickens had brought her to the attention of *The Publishers' Circular*.¹⁰⁰ When announcing the publication of Hesba's second novel, *Paul's Courtship*, in 1867, the Circular introduced her to readers as 'Miss Hesba Stretton, who was first brought into notice in Dickens's Christmas number of *All The Year Round*'.¹⁰¹ *Paul's Courtship* was first published by Charles Wood with whom Hesba had become friendly before leaving for France.¹⁰²

The friendship between Hesba and Charles Wood extended beyond publishing: judging from entries in the logbooks, both Hesba and Lizzie enjoyed Charles Wood's

⁹⁸ Monica Correa Fryckstedt discusses this Victorian publishing convention in the Introduction to her short and useful study of Victorian fiction, *On The Brink: English Novels of 1866*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, University of Uppsala, Stockholm, 1989.

⁹⁹ A.L.O.E.'s book, above, was advertised for sale at one shilling and sixpence. It is on the basis of advertisements for books by Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker writing as A.L.O.E., which appeared in close proximity in *The Publishers' Circular* throughout the years 1865 to 1867, that one can assume that these writers, if not known to each other personally, would have been aware of one another's writing through this important publishing chronicle.

¹⁰⁰ For example, *Mrs Lirriper's Legacy*, the Christmas edition of *All the Year Round* for 1865, which included Hesba's tale 'A Past Lodger ...', sold over 220,000 copies. *British Literary Magazines: The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913*, edited by Alvin Sullivan, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1984, p. 13.

¹⁰¹ *The Publishers' Circular*, Vol. 712, May 15, 1867, p. 279.

¹⁰² Soon after publication, the Religious Tract Society bought the copyright from Wood and the novel was included in their lists.

company. One writer, N.M. Cutts, has speculated that Hesba's five-year friendship with Charles Wood may have constituted her 'one serious love affair', but evidence for this is thin.¹⁰³ Platonic friendship or worshipping from afar was probably closer to the mark since Charles Wood was some years younger than Hesba and Lizzie.¹⁰⁴ Notes in Hesba's logbooks indicate that she and Lizzie visited Charles Wood at his mother's residence in Hampstead and that he visited them often in return. Hesba noted, for example, that he came to see them to announce that they, mother and son, had bought the *Argosy* in 1867. Wood seemed to vacillate; one minute dancing attendance, the next minute being very quiet and shy.¹⁰⁵ Hesba thought that she detected 'slight symptoms of a "mother's influence"' and was determined that she and Lizzie would 'not spend another Sunday' with Mrs Henry Wood whom they both found exasperating.¹⁰⁶ After Wood's purchase of the *Argosy*, Hesba often referred to him affectionately as 'Jason' (of the *Argosy*), and described him as a 'drole' boy.

Charles Wood frequently acted as a chaperone and went as far as accompanying Hesba when she explored London's slums and docklands to gather material for her books, but he evidently failed to act like an ardent suitor.¹⁰⁷ When Hesba and Lizzie were in France, he sent them his photograph as a token of esteem, and it was at about this time that Hesba had her own photograph taken at the suggestion of her publisher, presumably to assist in selling her books. In this likeness, she looks extremely self-possessed and quietly confident. Although she was then aged about thirty-six and was, in Victorian terms, beyond her prime, she retained a calm strength in her face. She is dressed in a simple but well-tailored dress, her hair is carefully arranged and she gazes past the viewer. She holds a book, probably a copy of *Jessica's First Prayer*, the juvenile tale which catapulted her to fame.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Cutts, *Ministering Angels*, p. 126.

¹⁰⁴ I have been unable to ascertain Charles Wood's precise date of birth. His mother, Ellen Price, married Henry Wood in 1836 and, according to John Sutherland's entry on Mrs. Henry Wood in *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction*, 1991, there were a number of children. Charles Wood may have been born as late as 1840. This may account for Hesba's description of Charles as a 'drole boy'.

¹⁰⁵ *Log book*, Oct [?], 1867.

¹⁰⁶ *Log book*, Oct. 19, 20 and 25, 1867.

¹⁰⁷ There is only one ambivalent entry in the log book concerning Charles Wood. On June 6 1869, Hesba recorded 'Jason's letters are very dismal; he wishes for the impossible'. What the 'impossible' was remains a mystery.

¹⁰⁸ Shropshire County Record Office, File 1217/3.



Plate 12. Hesba Stretton in 1868 aged thirty- six. The photograph was taken for *The Lady*.

Given Hesba's poor opinion of most men, it is likely that Charles Wood was regarded by the sisters more as a surrogate younger brother than a potential lover. Perhaps in their eyes he replaced Benjamin Smith who had emigrated to Canada in 1862. Certainly their disapproval of his sudden marriage was similar to their response to the news of Benjamin's marriage. The close friendship which had developed was curtailed abruptly in late 1869 when Charles Wood married a wealthy young woman unknown to the sisters. Hesba was shocked by his secretive behaviour and recorded in her log book:

Jason wrote that he was going to be married, having never mentioned the girl at all; such is Man! Heard once from Jason; his girl is rich and we suspect common.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Log book, Oct. [?], 1869.

Having met 'the girl' in 1870, Hesba relented slightly and wrote:

Went to Mrs Wood's office to visit Jason and his wife; she is very plain but very pleasant and unaffected. Jason was quiet; did not take any pride in her, but asked us at the first opportunity what we thought of her. We said she was much too good for him and he did not deserve such luck.¹¹⁰

Hesba Stretton's relationships with other women were often fraught with tension. She evidently found Mrs Henry Wood difficult — 'empty' was her expression, but it must be remembered that Mrs. Henry Wood was a successful writer when Hesba entered the scene and there may have been vestiges of professional jealousy which impinged on friendship. Hesba quarrelled frequently with landladies and publishers and she found other female charity workers tedious.¹¹¹ In terse log book entries she remarked freely on other women's superficiality, their propensity to gossip and to hold vulgar conversations. One woman she described as 'odious' because she had questioned the writer on her religious conversion.¹¹²

M.N. Cutts has suggested, in her brief study, that Hesba was 'unsociable, censorious, and easily bored ... disapproved of most modes of amusement and was especially intolerant of those inaugurated by women'.¹¹³ J.S. Bratton who has written about Hesba Stretton's journalism and juvenile fiction, concedes that Hesba was tough-minded when it came to conducting her own life, although in her fiction and philanthropic interests she showed another side to her character, one which displayed understanding and compassion.¹¹⁴

In a business-sense, women had little to offer Hesba, and many of the men in publishing with whom she had to associate appeared to her to let her down. She wrote angrily in 1862: 'Expected a check [sic] from "Temple Bar" [for a tale entitled 'Alice Gilbert']. Of course it did not come. No faith in Edmund Yates nor any man.'¹¹⁵ The underscore is significant. In her resounding opinion, 'All men are cheats, especially publishers'.¹¹⁶ Her logbooks are littered with references to men being 'odd', 'strange'

¹¹⁰ *Log book*, March 8, 1870.

¹¹¹ In 1868, Hesba and Lizzie rented rooms in Epping Forest. They found the landlady disagreeable and she recorded in her log book, 'Had a stir with the old lady who made us pay 6/- too much; we have made her sign an agreement about not paying for the holidays'. *Log book*, Dec. 20, 1868.

¹¹² The full entry reads: 'Went to see the Pennefeathers; an odious woman inquired about my conversion before we had been in the house two minutes'. *Log book*, Jan. 12, 1870.

¹¹³ Cutts, *Ministering Angels*, p. 119.

¹¹⁴ Bratton, *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction*, pp. 81-98.

¹¹⁵ *Log book*, May 13, 1862.

¹¹⁶ *Log book*, March 9, 1868. The series of events which led to this expostulation are described fully in Sue Rickard, 'Living By the Pen': Hesba Stretton's Moral Earnings, *Women's History Review*, forthcoming (Jan. 1996).

and even 'jealous'. For the historian it is difficult to pinpoint reasons why Hesba found relationships with men difficult. Did her difficulties stem from her relationship with her unworldly father who, although apparently amicable and supportive, was nevertheless distant? Certainly, Hesba was constantly irritated by his lack of business acumen and Bratton has suggested that this is what soured their relationship.¹¹⁷

On a different front, Hesba's investigations into child neglect and abuse, culminating in her agitation for protective legislation, turned up evidence which angered her deeply. In her fiction she often made scathing references to the behaviour of men. In one moving passage in *Cassy*, written in 1874, she explored that anger through the thoughts of her waif-heroine Cassy who understood men's unequal power and her own powerlessness against a brute, like her employer, Mr Tilly.

Cassy continued to regard him [her master, Mr. Tilly] with awe, and scarcely dared to speak in the presence of such a personage. Now and then he condescended to make her a butt for his rough jokes, and very often he vented his drunken fury upon her in preference to his wife, who sometimes proved stronger than himself; but Cassy did not resent either. All her life long she had known that that was the way with men, and that women and girls like herself existed only to submit to their jokes and fury. It was so simple, and so self-evident, that it was not at all a mystery to her.¹¹⁸

Hesba, for all her fault-finding, was not a man nor a woman-hater and she made a number of references to the enjoyable evenings spent with her sisters and conversing in French with Monsieur Clerc, the quick-witted teacher whom she engaged for language lessons in 1868. She always enjoyed listening to intelligent men, especially those who delivered a profound sermon. What she clearly did not enjoy was useless chit-chat, coming to that final conclusion after one social gathering in 1867. She wrote that, having endured an evening of empty discourse, she and Lizzie were 'not fitted for society'.¹¹⁹ All this points to a deep-seated internal ambivalence. She had a few close friends, including Henrietta Synott who had similar philanthropic interests, but over the years she parted company with many acquaintances. She experienced a love-hate relationship with both the country and city, and was never particularly happy for long in either location. It was her family, and particularly her sister Lizzie, who remained closest to her and who knew her best.

¹¹⁷ Bratton, *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction*, p. 83.

¹¹⁸ Hesba Stretton, *Cassy*, R.T.S. London, 1874, p. 77.

¹¹⁹ *Log book*, April 23, 1867. The entry reads: 'Had tea at Mr. Jackson's; Colonel and Mrs. Close, Mrs. Bale and Mr. Leighton there: did not enjoy it at all and came away convinced that we are not fitted for society'.

Social networks were, however, extremely important for her work, particularly since Hesba was forced to take part in gatherings arranged by the editors of the Religious Tract Society who were her major publishers between 1865 and 1875. The links between evangelical publishers and philanthropists were particularly strong at the time and, through their offices, Hesba was able to receive recognition and negotiate her terms from a position of strength. Later, when working to institute the London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Hesba's contacts established through the Society, enabled her to associate with influential and wealthy philanthropic men and women such as Lord Shaftesbury and Angela Burdett-Coutts. Although Miss Coutts was never to become a close friend, she proved to be an important ally in Hesba's fight for social justice for children.

The log book suggests that Hesba may have considered herself to be unfitted for society, however, she enjoyed playing a role in it, if only as an interested observer. This is confirmed by one short entry she recorded in 1870 where she noted: 'Went into Piccadilly to the Tract Society Depot; a most amusing scene there, bubbling over with lords and ladies'.¹²⁰ Hesba would have known that among the hundreds of thousands who supported charities and wept over her books, lords and ladies, bishops and politicians, were essential role models and patrons of philanthropic causes.

In this social setting Hesba Stretton discovered that she had developed a legitimate and compelling voice.

Charitable Society

For a woman who was closely associated with philanthropic causes, Hesba Stretton's attitude towards charitable society often appears strangely ambivalent. From her early days in Wellington, she was critical of the ways charity operated on a small scale in social circles. As we have learned, she loathed Dorcas Society sewing circles although in all probability, she would have been the first to admit that garments, particularly the baby clothes produced in such circles, were usually welcomed. She could not bear her father's continual 'begging' for the church, although the church assisted parishioners in charitable ways. She complained bitterly about having to attend 'stupid mothers' meetings' in a settlement in Golden Lane in London,¹²¹ but was supportive in her fiction at least, of abandoned mothers forced to bring up children alone.

¹²⁰ *Log book*, Jan. 12, 1870.

¹²¹ *Log book*, April 22, 1870.

She remonstrated loudly about inefficiencies in the organisation of certain charities and wrote, 'I am disheartened at the waste in London Charities', having spent time visiting the Children's Hospital in Great Ormond Street.¹²² And yet, in her book, *Alone in London*, another best-seller, she put aside any doubts and demanded more hospital cots for children. In *Alone in London*, Oliver, the anxious grandfather, takes his sick granddaughter, Dolly, to 'the Hospital for Sick Children', only to be turned away. A distressed and overworked nurse tells him that there were 'not more than one hundred and fifty cots in all London for sick children.'¹²³ Hesba's emotive writing informed the public of the dire shortage of beds and assisted charities like Aunt Judy's Cots for Children,¹²⁴ as well as similar groups, who appealed for hospital sponsorship through the pages of the *Band of Hope Review*, *Good Words* and the *Sunday Magazine*. Paradoxically, Hesba thus lent her full public support to charitable individuals and organisations. Her hope was always to encourage philanthropic and benevolent behaviour from readers in a position to give financial support.

Hesba refers in her log books to some of London's most depressing areas. She noted a number of ragged schools in London, including the George Yard Ragged School which she visited on at least two occasions, another in Whitechapel, and yet another in Playhouse Yard,¹²⁵ but she took no pleasure from "slumming" as the magazine *Punch* labelled visits paid by the rich to view the poor.¹²⁶ Hesba went specifically to see what conditions prevailed and later relayed her observations in fiction and articles which appeared in popular journals. While she was shocked by the evident deprivation suffered by the children she saw, she was often also heartened by their enthusiasm for the activities within the ragged schools; she wrote that she was 'delighted' by a brass band she heard in Whitechapel and amused by a play she watched pupils perform in the George Yard Ragged School.¹²⁷

¹²² *Log Book*, March 3, 1869.

¹²³ Hesba Stretton, *Alone In London*, RTS, 1869, p. 134.

¹²⁴ Mrs. Horatia Gatty and her daughter, Juliana Horatia Ewing, were both writers of children's fiction and edited and contributed to *Aunt Judy's Magazine*. Mrs Gatty personally endowed several cots to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children and through the magazine, donations were collected to sponsor more. Christabel Maxwell, *Mrs Gatty and Mrs Ewing*, Constable, London, 1949, p. 15, p. 148.

¹²⁵ *Log book* entries in Feb. 1868, March-Sept. 1869.

¹²⁶ *Punch* 'Overdoing It', 1883. The cartoon shows a party of well-dressed men and women preparing to leave on a visit, all wearing mackintoshes. The text reads: "What, going already and in a Makintosh! Surely, you're not going to walk? "Oh, dear no! Lord Archbishop is going to take us to a dear little slum he's found out near the Minories - such a fearful place! 14 Poor Things sleeping in one bed, and no window! - and the Mackintosh's are to keep out the infection, you know, and hide one's diamonds, and all that".

¹²⁷ *Log book* entries Feb. 18 and 25, 1870.

Beatrice Webb, who became one of England's most prominent social investigators, some years later followed Hesba Stretton into the East End. Her reactions to the inhabitants were, however, markedly different. She admitted privately in her diary to a loathing of the 'aborigines of the East End ... with their wretched and disorderly lives',¹²⁸ but at the same time felt a frisson of excitement, especially when adopting various disguises on visits to London's seedier areas.¹²⁹ By contrast, Hesba experienced rage and contempt for the perpetrators of cruelty, she took heart from witnessing cases of individual fortitude, and her compassion shone through in her writing.¹³⁰ Like Beatrice Webb, however, she knew that it required more than sympathy to ameliorate injustice. Although her pseudonym was a form of protection, Hesba never resorted to personal disguise to undertake her investigations—the now-famous pen-name acted effectively as a social passport. This is not to insist upon Hesba's saintliness nor to plead for irreproachable virtue. In private, she revealed a great deal of personal prejudice and freely criticised 'high' society, those she saw as religious hypocrites, and the 'idle people' she knew.¹³¹ As a social critic, however, she never hesitated to express strong feelings. Indeed, as Cutts has argued, Hesba loathed exploitation and cruelty of all kinds, especially the 'blank-faced indifference of the Poor Law', and the 'lack of legal protection for women and children of all classes'.¹³²

While she often found the East End depressing, some inhabitants inspired her. One figure, Nairne Dowson, a working philanthropist and one of the governors of the Children's Hospital in Shadwell, aroused Hesba to write an article in the *Sunday Magazine* entitled 'The Christian Patriot'.¹³³ Dowson had taken Hesba on a tour of the hospital, refuge and surrounding neighbourhood. Hesba documented some of the injuries inflicted by abusive parents on their children, including one boy whose back had been broken 'by a brutal kick from his drunken father.'¹³⁴ As well as establishing a hospice for dying children, Dowson worked among neglected and abused street children in

¹²⁸ Beatrice Webb, Diary, 12 April & 4 June 1885, in *The Diary of Beatrice Webb, Glitter Around and Darkness Within, Volume One 1873-1892*, edited by Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, Virago, London, 1986, p. 134.

¹²⁹ Beatrice Webb confided in her diary on 20 October 1887, that her investigative work made her 'terribly despondent and disgusted with my own, impulsive, mad behaviour. At other times enjoying my spectator's life ...'. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹³⁰ As Cutts has argued, 'Hesba Stretton's London was not all gloomy; there is goodness and honesty, human kindness and generosity.' *Ministering Angels*, p. 138. As noted earlier, Lord Shaftesbury praised her clear-eyed compassion.

¹³¹ *Log book*, April 1, 1869. 'Spent Saturday and Sunday at Mr Beddows; never saw such hopelessly and awfully idle people'.

¹³² Cutts, *Ministering Angels*, p. 133. The New Poor Law and its servants came under Hesba's specific fire in two of her tales, *Cassy* and *The King's Servants*.

¹³³ Hesba Stretton, 'The Christian Patriot: An East End Sketch', *Sunday Magazine*, n.d. c. 1890, pp. 554-558.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 556.

Ratcliff Cross and provided them with material necessities. In her article, Hesba noted that Dowson had written himself a reminder which she reproduced: "After all, it is not money the poor need so much as a friend; one who will, at any rate, try to follow the steps of Jesus Christ, live his self-denying life among them, and win them back by never-ceasing kindness to believe in a God of love".¹³⁵ It was philosophy close to her own. At the end of the article, Hesba appealed to readers to donate enough money to keep the hospice going for another year; she estimated that 'between £200 and £225; a modest sum surely for the maintenance and succour of twelve incurable little children', would ensure the hospice's survival.¹³⁶

Hesba also visited the Shoe Black Academies and ragged schools established by Mr. John (Rob Roy) Macgregor and lobbied for the continuance of these schools after the passage of the Elementary Education Act in 1870. She wrote in an article about the lives of 'gutter children' who took advantage of these schools: 'Only those who, like the present writer, have had to go among them at all times and seasons can fully realise how sad, how full of suffering, their life is.'¹³⁷ She described Badger's Court, a foul set of dwellings consisting of about thirty four-roomed houses, each house shared by at least two families—settings which re-emerged in *Alone in London*, *Meg's Little Children*, and other tales.¹³⁸ Having toured a number of refuges in a particularly rough part of the East End accompanied by a policeman, she wrote in her log book that she thought London a 'horrible' and 'wicked' place. She wrote of passing through 'disgusting streets' where she 'looked over two homes and ragged school'. In another article, 'A Thieves' Supper', written for the *Sunday Magazine*, she described her visit to various prisoners' missions. After a detailed description of the work involved and the people assisting, she suggested that such valuable aid to released prisoners could not continue without funds and helpers. She urged readers to send donations 'whether it be a hundred guinea cheque or a shilling postal order'.¹³⁹ Mentioning philanthropic money never made Hesba Stretton squeamish; her practical nature and experience in handling other peoples' money in the Wellington Post Office Savings Bank, allowed her to be unusually frank about financial matters.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 555.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 558.

¹³⁷ [Hesba Stretton], 'Gutter Children', *Good Words*, Vol. 14, 1873, pp. 178-184.

¹³⁸ Enid Gaudie's study, *Cruel Habitations: A History of Working-Class Housing 1780-1918*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1974, provides a comprehensive history of housing problems, as does A.S. Wohl in S.D. Chapman (ed.), *The History of Working Class Housing*, Newton Abbott, 1971 and H.J. Dyos and D.A. Reeder in *The Victorian City, Images and Realities: Shapes on the Ground/A Change of Accent*, Volume II, Edited by H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973.

¹³⁹ Hesba Stretton, 'A Thieves' Supper', *Sunday Magazine*, Vol. II, May 1882, pp. 447-452.

In Liverpool in 1869, she recorded visits to 'Orphanages, Children's Homes, Asylums and Nursing Districts'. While she was in the port city she made the acquaintance of Maria Rye who arranged an emigration scheme for neglected children to Australia, New Zealand and Canada.¹⁴⁰ Hesba called them "Miss Rye's gutter children".¹⁴¹ Later, a fictional heroine named 'Milly', combining the composite qualities of Maria Rye and Josephine Butler, the celebrated rescue worker, appeared in Hesba's tale, *The King's Servant's*. A young girl, whose description is of 'hollow cheeks ... painted, and the thin, wasted arms and shoulders hardly covered by the dingy finery', is helped by Milly to emigrate to America to find domestic employment and escape an early death, the "inevitable" fate of prostitution.¹⁴² Hesba, like many others of her generation, including her mentor, Charles Dickens, admired and supported such emigration schemes, regarding emigration as a social panacea and an opportunity for individuals and families to begin a new life. Emigration appeared in a number of her books, including *The Storm of Life* and *The Fishers of Derbyhaven*, and it should be remembered that her brother Benjamin had emigrated successfully to Canada. The problems of dislocation which are now well recognised, emerged too late for writers like Hesba or Dickens to appreciate.

Expert knowledge of social ills was all well and good, but it was not sufficient. Knowing that her fiction and prose had drawn attention to problems such as child abuse, poverty and homelessness, and had successfully coaxed money out of generous purses, Hesba was finally compelled to take independent and public action herself. In this important respect, she pre-empted Beatrice Webb, not merely by her personal chronology but also because of her personal convictions and actions. As a writer, Hesba used her fiction as a sword and a shield, and had, in Beatrice's terms, 'thrust herself before the world'. As a radical activist yet conservative Christian, she probably would have been pleased to learn that Beatrice Webb approved of women who thrust themselves before the world 'when religious feeling or morality demand[ed] it'. Beatrice believed that it was only for these reasons 'that a woman ha[d] a right to lift up her voice and call aloud to her fellow mortals'.¹⁴³ In 1884, aged fifty-two, she went one important step further and invoked her right to speak out.

¹⁴⁰ Feminist, Maria Rye, (1829-1903), has attracted much criticism for her emigration schemes for middle-class women and gutter children. See, for example, Marion Diamond, 'Maria Rye and Female Emigration: Work in Progress', University of Queensland History Conference, 1991, pp. 9-12, who writes of Maria Rye's 'export' of children, whose work marked the 'beginning of a long and scandalous period of child migration', p. 12. For a more sympathetic account of Rye's work, see Patricia Clarke, *The Governesses: Letters from the Colonies 1862-1882*, Hutchinson of Australia, Melbourne, 1985, and Phillipa Levine, *Feminist Lives in Victorian England: Private Lives and Public Commitment*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1990, p. 69. Charles Dicken's Urania House rescue scheme and his belief in the benefits of emigration has also been criticised.

¹⁴¹ *Log book*, Oct. 13, 1869.

¹⁴² Hesba Stretton, *The Kings Servants*, RTS, London, 1873, p. 135.

¹⁴³ Beatrice Webb, 27 Nov. 1887, in *The Diary of Beatrice Webb*, p. 223.

Through her investigation and writing about social and moral problems Hesba Stretton had become, in fact and in fiction, a well-respected and knowledgeable children's advocate. It was this gradual realisation of her power, and her frustration at a lack of action, which finally forced her to act in a political manner by making an appeal to the public. She used the pages of *The Times* to protest at the abuse and neglect of children and she called for wholehearted public support for protective legislation to be linked with the establishment of the London Society for the Protection of Children (LSPCC).

Her involvement with the Society began in the early 1880s when she heard in a public lecture that the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children had successfully prosecuted a man for punching his child. Thomas Frederick Agnew, a Liverpool merchant and banker, delivered the lecture and had established a kindred society, the Liverpool Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, in 1883.¹⁴⁴ He invited Hesba to visit the shelter inspiring her to lobby for the establishment of a similar society in London and in other large towns across the country. She wrote three letters to *The Times* in 1884, describing the work she had seen in Liverpool and the need for such a Society in London. Her first letter expressed disappointment at the lack of response to earlier letters to the newspaper from philanthropists Florence Davenport-Hill and Baroness Burdett-Coutts, concerning cruelty to children:

I have been looking anxiously, but in vain, for some other influential persons to take up this important subject. For the last 20 years I have interested myself deeply in the condition of the children of the poor, and I therefore venture to ask you to insert this letter. ... Few people have any idea of the extent of active cruelty, and still more of cruel neglect, towards children among our degraded and criminal classes. The need for a national society [for the prevention of cruelty to children] is very great and will become greater.

Prevention is better than punishment and the knowledge that such a society exists will help passionate and brutal persons to control their violent tempers; and children thus protected from their tyranny will not grow up brutalized or enfeebled in mind and body. Let there be a society to take up, investigate, and act upon any case, and let it be widely known when and how the the power of such a society could be appealed to, and the vast proportion of tyranny and oppression and neglect suffered by helpless children would be prevented. I trust that some of your philanthropic and influential readers who possess the gift of organisation, may plan out and set on a foot such a society and deliver us as a nation from the curse and crime, the shame and sin of neglected and oppressed childhood.

Faithfully yours, HESBA STRETTON.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Thomas F.A. Agnew, (1834-1924), petitioned the Liverpool corporation and was permitted to establish the shelter in the city. For a detailed description of his work, see Behlmer, *The Child Protection Movement*, pp. 143-150.

¹⁴⁵ Hesba Stretton, *The Times*, Jan. 8, 1884., p. 12.

The second letter detailed her visit to the Liverpool Shelter and gave figures on the cases the Society had received in the first six months: '211 cases involving the welfare of no less than 378 children; 50 cases of violence, 106 of cruel neglect, 210 of begging, vagrancy and exposure, and 12 of immorality'.¹⁴⁶ She described the shelter as a 'small, inexpensive house' and the arrangements for the children as:

admirably simple. ... The business of the society seems to be done in a practical and methodical, yet most kindly manner [by] the superintendent and his wife ... who are giving to their very painful work an enlightened, patient and Christian charity.¹⁴⁷

She reassured those who feared draconian interference that only cases brought to the Society's attention would be taken up. However, by the time the legislation was eventually passed in 1889, the Society's inspectors were granted certain legal powers and the Courts were able to exercise fully the legal concept of *parens patriae* ("father of the nation") and take children into protective custody.¹⁴⁸ But all that was to come.¹⁴⁹

Hesba finished her plea by adding:

I venture to say that there is scarcely a parish in England where some case of cruel neglect would not be brought to light if there was a national society for the prevention of cruelty to children.¹⁵⁰

In the third letter she announced that a meeting was to be held in the Mansion House under the auspices of the Lord Mayor, and enjoined 'philanthropists of all creeds and opinions to be present'. Anxious to allay fears that the Society would steal children away from parents like latter-day body-snatchers, Hesba wrote:

The poor will quickly learn that this society seeks only to rescue and protect these little victims of drunkenness and indolence; and they will gladly avail themselves of its help, bringing the children to the shelters of their own accord. For the poor love children as much as the rich do;¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Hesba Stretton, *The Times*, May 26, 1884, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*,

¹⁴⁸ See, Behlmer, *The Child Protection Movement*, 'Towards The Children's Charter', Chapter. V, pp. 194-275.

¹⁴⁹ Anne Allen & Arthur Morton in, *This is Your Child*, point out that 'at the time, such legislation ... appeared to be so revolutionary that there were many who doubted whether the Bill would pass the House', *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹⁵¹ Hesba Stretton, *The Times*, June 30, 1884, p. 11.

The point that Hesba and her co-organisers missed was that the rich also abused their children, as did members of the prosperous middle-classes.¹⁵² Initially, contemporary assumptions about the linkages of class and behaviour directed the society's attention solely towards 'the idle beggar and the besotted drunkard'. This assumption was also to change with experience. Hesba wrote a strong and impassioned appeal for the Society, shown below, which appeared later in Christmas edition of the *Sunday Magazine* in 1884.¹⁵³ Fifty thousand copies were distributed, in addition to the large circulation of the magazine.



THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO CHILDREN

The Appeal of the London Society.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

Plate 13. *An Appeal of the London Society* by Hesba Stretton. The *Sunday Magazine* 1884. The waif, a familiar icon in Hesba's writing, was used with effect, to confront readers' sensibilities.

After the public meeting formally establishing the Society in June 1884, Hesba wrote a report for *The Times* in which she made great play of an eighteen-foot long petition with thousands of signatures which had been presented to the Lord Mayor supporting the Society's establishment. She also quoted Lord Shaftesbury who remarked that, among its other activities, 'he hoped the Society would put a stop to cruelties

¹⁵² Her co-organisers and sponsors included Baroness Burdett-Coutts, Lord Shaftesbury, (who became its President), Reverend Benjamin Waugh (who became Honorary Secretary), Sir Henry Fowler, Samuel Smith MP, Dr. Barnardo, Cardinal Manning and the publisher, C. Kegan Paul.

¹⁵³ The Appeal was re-issued under the title, *The Paths of Peace*. These figures are taken from Rosa Waugh, *The Life of Benjamin Waugh*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1913, p. 136.

practised upon children in connection with their training for purposes of public amusement ... children trained for theatres and other places of public amusement ... had to submit to forms of cruelty.’¹⁵⁴ The first shelter and headquarters of the London Society was opened at 7 Harpur Street, off Theobalds Road in Holborn, on 27 October, 1884.¹⁵⁵

Soon after, using material collected by the Society, Hesba wrote a serious article for the *Sunday Magazine* entitled, ‘An Acrobat’s Girlhood’, which traced the short and tragic career of ‘Trixy’, who was worked to death in a circus acrobatic act. The article closed with the words, ‘I thought of the hundreds and hundreds of young children whose lives and souls were being risked that people might be entertained in the coming Christmas holidays’.¹⁵⁶ This was not only a reminder to the magazine’s readers, but also a reproof directed squarely at editors of the Religious Tract Society who, Hesba knew, had taken their children to the Christmas pantomime.¹⁵⁷

Hesba also wrote a number of leaflets for the Society which had a wide circulation as single-leaf flyers, including one entitled *Cruelly Treated Children* written in 1886, in which she referred not only to the work of the London Society but also to the work of its ‘kindred Society for protecting animals’, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.¹⁵⁸ The London Society, she wrote, ‘knows no distinction of rank or religion. Wherever cruelty to children exists, or whatever form it takes, the Society holds itself bound to rescue its victims.’¹⁵⁹

The Society used Hesba’s name extensively since the writer and her books had become synonymous with its aims, and the writer allowed her name to be used since it furthered the Society’s cause and enhanced her literary and philanthropic reputation. Her particular brand of realistic fiction and documentary, with that of Hollingshead, Sims and Greenwood and others, had preceded the Society’s establishment.¹⁶⁰ Beyond doubt,

¹⁵⁴ *The Times*, July 9, 1884. Despite the passage of the Children’s Dangerous Performance Act in 1879, children continued to be exploited in circuses and theatres because of the difficulty in proving charges.

¹⁵⁵ By May 1889, the Society had committees and shelters in 31 towns and cities from the north to the south of England, and by the end of 1889, had more in Dublin, Belfast and Cork.

¹⁵⁶ Hesba Stretton, ‘An Acrobat’s Girlhood’, *Sunday Magazine*, n.s. Vol. 18, 1889, pp. 408-146, (p. 416).

¹⁵⁷ Bratton, *The Impact of Victorian Children’s Fiction*, p. 93.

¹⁵⁸ James Colam, Secretary of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, gave valuable advice to Hesba Stretton and Benjamin Waugh when they were first establishing the LSPCC. Waugh, *ibid.*, p. 135.

¹⁵⁹ ‘*Cruelly Treated Children by Hesba Stretton*’, Letter Leaflet No. 2. National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Foundation Archives, London.

¹⁶⁰ In addition to her listed fiction, Hesba Stretton also wrote an article entitled ‘The Battle of the Poor: Sketches from Courts and Alleys’ for *The Day of Rest*, Jan. 1873. No copy of this article

these writers played important individual roles in paving the way for change. Those who claimed they were unaware of cruelty and abuse, or who had closed their eyes and minds to its existence, could not ignore Hesba's insistent message. She did not exactly trade upon her name, but she was never reluctant to point out her connection with the Society. For example, when writing to the publisher, T. Unwin Fisher in 1890 about another appeal, this time for the relief of famine in Russia, she indicated that she she had no objection to another knowing her identity: 'Send a line to him [George Keenan] ... telling him who I am. I was the first person in London to start the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children five years ago.'¹⁶¹

By 1887, Hesba's colleague, Reverend Benjamin Waugh, writing in the Society's paper, *The Child's Guardian*, indicated that the Society would act without fear or favour. Cruelty, the Society asserted, crossed economic and class boundaries: 'We will have a single eye to putting down the cruel treatment of children, which will be turned aside neither by the poverty not the wealth of their wrong-doers'.¹⁶² In 1889, the Parliament passed its first Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and Queen Victoria graciously agreed to become the Patron of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Hesba Stretton's voice had greatly assisted this mighty effort, and she was remembered in the Society's annals with gratitude.¹⁶³

There is a final footnote, and knowing Hesba's financial acuity, it is one which might have been predicted. The London Society, propelled by Benjamin Waugh and the co-founders, including Hesba Stretton herself, became a National Society in 1889. While Hesba and others, including the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, admired Waugh's energy and total commitment to the Society, they became increasingly concerned at the financial liabilities he was incurring through "Nationalisation". Burdett-Coutts was the first to resign from the Executive Committee and Hesba soon followed.

In a letter dated December 15, 1884, addressed to Lord Channing, she outlined the reasons for her resignation:

has been found but it was advertised, together with the announcement of Hesba Stretton's tale, *Michel Lorio's Cross*, (1872), in *The Publishers' Circular*, No. 845, Vol XXXV, Dec. 9, 1872, p. 965.

¹⁶¹ Hesba Stretton to T. Fisher Unwin, April 29, 1890, ALS, Harry Ransome Humanities Research Centre, The University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁶² Benjamin Waugh, *The Child's Guardian*, London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 1887.

¹⁶³ Robert J. Parr, Director of the NSPCC, 'The Work of the NSPCC', *The Microcosm*, n.d. c. 1924, NSPCC Archives, File, B.11.

My Lord,

I hear from the Baroness Burdett-Coutts that she had resigned from her post on the Executive Committee of the N.S.P.C.C. It has been partly in deference to her work that I did not do the same upon hearing the letters read to the Committee from Sir F. de Winton and Mr. Falk [also Committee members]. I beg to resign for the same reasons alleged by them; especially by Sir. F. de Winton.

I heard lately that the Hon. Director [Benjamin Waugh] has forbidden the auditors to give any information to any member of the Executive. I cannot continue [to be] liable for expenditure and debts over which I have no control and of which I can obtain no information. I regret extremely being compelled to leave a Committee on which I have served from its formation; and I beg that this letter may be read to those colleagues with whom I have worked, and whom I shall never see again.

I am, my Lord, faithfully yours, Hesba Stretton.

Travelling and Staying Home

Hesba Stretton had begun her independent journey in 1863 and had made her name relatively quickly in 1866 with *Jessica's First Prayer*. Although her fortune was never large, she earned a respectable income from the mid-1860s onwards, enough to keep herself and her sister living modestly in rented lodgings.

Despite their initial dismal experience in France in 1869, Hesba and Lizzie Stretton became inveterate travellers and had between them sufficient income to enable frequent trips to the Continent. From 1870 onwards, Hesba recorded visits to the Isle of Man, Devon and Cornwall, the Channel Islands, France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. Her time was not wasted: she soaked up her surroundings and later incorporated elements of landscape and local custom into her writing. Two of her short stories revolved around her first visit to France—'Ten Years A Nun' and 'Half An Hour's Walk in Normandy'.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Her walk in Normandy paints a delightful word picture. She began, '[T]he perfection of a walk, as I understand walk, is to be found near Honfleur', and she goes on to describe graphically the harbour with its bobbing boats, the open sea, smooth headlands, groves of trees, bird song, the breeze, and then silence in a coppice of fir trees. Hesba Stretton, 'Half An Hour's Walk in Normandy', *Argosy*, Vol. 5, May, 1868, p. 426.

Michel Lorio's Cross, her personal favourite novel, was set in part on Mont St. Michel, the rock and causeway off the coast of France. She reportedly told Hulda Friederichs:

The idea suggested itself to me one evening when my sister and I were staying at St. Michael's Mount, in Normandy. We had been into the interesting old church, hewn partly into a rock, and as we were coming out we heard loud groans coming in one of the cottages near by. We went in, and found an old woman in bed, and talked to her for a while. And this incident suggested the story.¹⁶⁵

In this novel, her attitudes towards Roman Catholicism were perceptibly softened after she had witnessed the charitable work of the religious community who assisted the dying woman. In a serial novel, *Half Brothers*, which appeared first in 1892 in the *Sunday Magazine*, the rather far-fetched drama concerning mistaken identities, is set in the Swiss-Italian alps where Hesba had enjoyed walking.¹⁶⁶ Another important book, *Max Krömer: A Story of the Siege of Strasbourg*, recorded in the Preface:

In September 1870, on returning from Switzerland, I passed through the upper valley of the Rhine, of which Strasbourg is the crown and capital, at the very time when the city was enduring its fiercest ordeal of fire. .. At every stage I saw how children were involved in the keen sufferings of war. In neutral Switzerland were children spending their sunny playtime picking lint for the wounded. As Basle we met a troop of fugitives, bare-foot, bare-headed, and in tatters, half of whom were young children; and at Calrsruhe a mother with four children, just escaped from Strasbourg, who had been entombed in the cellars for days past. At Mannheim, the wife and little son of a distinguished French officer were waiting hour after hour for some tidings of him, who was wounded, a prisoner, and lost amidst the crowd of the other victims of the war. Thus vividly impressed with the great and sad share which falls to the lot of children, in all *the misery produced by the crimes and mistakes of men*, I wrote the story of Max Krömer, softened down, rather than heightening, the horrors of the siege of Strasbourg. [Italics added].

In conclusion, I dedicate this little book to my noble countrymen and countrywomen who on that occasion spent themselves—not their property merely—in aiding the distressed peasantry of France.¹⁶⁷

This important element of Hesba Stretton's life and writing is usually overlooked. She has been portrayed both as a Puritan and a killjoy, a woman who denied herself pleasures and resented others' enjoyment. This is patently not the case. Hesba Stretton was undoubtedly a serious woman who in today's terms would be regarded as an

¹⁶⁵ Hulda Friederichs, 'Hesba Stretton at Home', *The Young Woman*, July 1894, p. 332.

¹⁶⁶ There are a number of references to walking in Hesba's Log Books. On Jan. 22, 1860, she wrote: 'A wade to Preston through indescribable mud and sludge. Enjoyed the visit'. See also Footnote 22, this chapter.

¹⁶⁷ Hesba Stretton, Preface, *Max Krömer: A Story of the Siege of Strasbourg*, RTS, London, 1871.

influential activist and, probably, a feminist. She directly castigated men and their role in waging war.

Elizabeth Lee, the writer of Hesba Stretton's entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, set in motion a myth which has remained almost unquestioned. She described Hesba as 'a woman who led a retired, simple and hardworking life, and avoided publicity, and wholly depended for her livelihood on her pen. She never went to the theatre, cared nothing for dress, and owned no jewellery.'¹⁶⁸ Many years later, Janet Todd described Hesba as living 'a long life of Puritan austerity ... devoted to unwearying philanthropy and prolific writing'.¹⁶⁹ John Sutherland got slightly closer to the mark when he noted that Hesba 'did well out of authorship' but then repeats the *Dictionary's* 'no theatre, cared little for dress' theme.¹⁷⁰ This is echoed by Joanne Shattock, 'She led an austere personal life, eschewing the theatre and an interest in personal possession, despite relative financial success'.¹⁷¹ Yet Hesba's austerity was not necessarily chosen; when she had money, she spent it wisely and generously. She supported temperance but there is no suggestion that she was a total abstainer. She despised drunkenness only because, in her eyes, it led to neglect, abuse and violence.

Her log books reveal that she *did* visit the theatre. She recorded her delight at seeing a performance of *A Mid-Summer Night's Dream*: '[which] we liked better than a concert & felt none the worse for going', and she saw Boucicault's play, *The Streets of London*.¹⁷² In 1870, on a trip to London, she visited art galleries and made notes on paintings, including John Martin's apocalyptic painting of the Destruction of Pompeii which she viewed at the South Kensington Museum, together with 'a scene from Hamlet, Derby Day [by Firth], and a delicious snow scene in the Black Forest'.¹⁷³ During another week, 22 June 1870, she visited the Crystal Palace, where she commented upon seeing 'beautiful paintings and sculpture' and noted again on the 27th, 'Went to the Exhibition again alone'. She recorded the purchase of bonnets and dresses, including a 'gorgeous silk dress',¹⁷⁴ and she bought books by Victor Hugo and J.R. Seeley at Mudie's Bookshop.¹⁷⁵ This hardly appears a life of Puritan austerity.

¹⁶⁸ Elizabeth Lee, 'Smith, Sarah, writing under the pseudonym of 'HESBA STRETTON', *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1901-1911 Supplement, Vol. 1, A-E, Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1911, pp. 346-7.

¹⁶⁹ *Dictionary of British Women Writers*, Janet Todd (ed.), Routledge, London, 1989, p. 651.

¹⁷⁰ John Sutherland, *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction*, p. 611.

¹⁷¹ Joanne Shattock, *The Oxford Guide to British Women Writers*, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 411.

¹⁷² *Log Book*, date unclear, 1865.

¹⁷³ *Log Book*, Feb. 24, 1870.

¹⁷⁴ *Log Book*, March 10, 1870.

¹⁷⁵ *Log Book*, Oct. 21, 1867.

On her travels she visited friends such as the eminent historian, Marc d'Aubinge, and the German theologian, Franz Delitzch who translated many of her stories into German. In Geneva, where she first met d'Aubinge, she recorded in her log book, 'Bought a watch and 3 brooches. Colonel Gautier called but we were out; great reverence in consequence from the hotel people'.¹⁷⁶ In an interview given in 1893 for the *Sunday At Home*, Hesba regaled the interviewer before luncheon, with 'pleasant conversation about Italy - "La Bella"- that ever fruitful topic to those who have been under its sunny skies and roamed about the glorious cities of the past. Naples, Pompeii, Rome, Florence, and Venice all came in for a share of delightful reminiscences.'¹⁷⁷ All this suggests another side of a complex individual who otherwise held her emotions in tight control.

Staying home proved to be a luxury. In 1892, Hesba bought her own home, 'Ivycroft', on Ham Common near Richmond, and there she and her sister created a domestic haven. They had lived together in all kinds of lodgings and in all sorts of conditions, but Hesba always managed to write for an admiring public. When settled with Lizzie in Ivycroft, she withdrew from conspicuous philanthropic life although she continued to write, keeping to a strict pattern of breakfast in bed, followed by a solitary walk, then writing uninterruptedly from ten in the morning until one in the afternoon. Her voice was still respected but her production of books dramatically slowed, although she never experienced difficulty in finding a publisher, and her books remained in print. When questioned about her method of writing, she answered quite simply:

An idea occurs to me that seems to be suitable, and it becomes a peg on which to hang a story. I do not work out the 'plot' before I begin it, and it often happens that the people in a story do things which I should never have thought they would at the outset.¹⁷⁸

Hesba was not attempting to be ingenuous when giving this answer. Like many writers, she was often propelled to write by her reactions to scenes witnessed; it was then her characters appeared to take on a life of their own and this sense of being close to life struck an immediate chord with readers. Her literary cohort, Felicia Skene, admitted the same phenomenon with respect to her characters. A note to John Blackwood, her publisher, stated that she often felt merely a conduit for ideas. Her books were written, she said, 'under a strong impulse just as if [an idea] rushed out of one's mind and on to

¹⁷⁶ *Log Book*, July 7, 1875.

¹⁷⁷ 'Miss Stretton At Home', *Sunday At Home*, RTS, London, 1893, p. 399.

¹⁷⁸ Friedrichs, 'Hesba Stretton at Home', *The Young Woman*, p. 332.

the page'.¹⁷⁹ These comments upon the process of literary creation are significant; both writers relied heavily upon research as well as imagination. In referring to her own literary impulses, Hesba seemed deliberately to downplay the detailed observations she had always taken and used in her writing. Given the effort expended in seeking out truth in many of the depressing domains she described, Hesba's attitude, a simplification if not a denial, remains perplexing.

Hesba's literary reputation grew as a result of her ability to write with pathos and candour, with the result that she was recognised by contemporaries as a truthful narrator and commentator. Her distinctive literary voice and skill in advocacy thus helped to negotiate a visible place for the writer and the woman in the literary and philanthropic worlds. Fiction and truth proved powerful weapons in her efforts to achieve social justice; amongst her allies were the publishers and readers who aided and abetted her work by publishing and buying her books. In the chapters to come, Hesba's success as a writer is considered from the perspective of her readers and publishers.

¹⁷⁹ Skene to Blackwood, letter, August 30, 1897. *Blackwood Papers*, MS 4666, Folio 193, National Library of Scotland.

Chapter IV

Charlotte Maria Tucker - Accidental Feminist - (1821-1893)

"A.L.O.E." - A Lady of England

Here I am again in dear old Amritsar ... we are waiting to hear what our saintly new Bishop says ... In a matter of such importance, it is right to wait for the advice of such an Apostolic man ... I wait passively.

There is plenty of work for me at Amritsar, more that I do at all properly ... You see ... there are quantities of Aunts in England; but an old Auntie is a rare bird in India, and therefore in request. I am like a hen with such a large brood.¹

Charlotte Maria Tucker wrote these lines about the foundation of a school in Amritsar, and about herself, in a letter to her beloved sister, Laura Hamilton. Charlotte, or A.L.O.E. as she was known to the reading public, had then been in Northern India for three years serving as an 'up-country' honorary missionary in a small out-station Church Missionary Society community in the Punjab. The letter also contained news about the comings and goings of various missionaries, a description of a shawl given to her by the 'affectionate natives', and a few brief remarks about her own work.

Read cursorily, it is a sisterly exchange between two women separated by vast distances. Looked at more closely, the text evokes an image of a gently ironic woman making light of her position, comparing her new status with the old. The document also voices contemporary beliefs and values about the proper role of a gentlewoman in Victorian society. In 1878, Charlotte Tucker was awaiting a favourable decision from 'the Apostolic' Bishop, Thomas Valpy French of the Lahore Diocese,² to open a school for the young Indian converts in Batala, or the 'young Christian native gentlemen,' as she described them.³ She was then fifty-nine years old, single, and working with other female missionaries of the Church of England Zenána Mission. The mission was newly-established in Batala, twenty-four miles east of Amritsar, the Holy City of the Sikhs. In her own eyes, she was no longer a dutiful daughter nor a maiden aunt, she was a woman with a mission.

1 Charlotte Maria Tucker (henceforth CMT) to Laura Hamilton, Feb. 23 1878, in Agnes Giberne, *A Lady of England: The Life and Letters of Charlotte Maria Tucker*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1895, p. 278.

2 Bishop Thomas Vaply French was the first Bishop of the Diocese of Lahore established in 1877.

3 Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

Judging from her tone, Charlotte Tucker seemed supremely happy with the prospect of new and important work ahead, and not the least with her promotion from the rank of plain maiden aunt. As we have already observed, maiden aunts, or to be more precise, unmarried daughters who remained at home to provide care for elderly relatives and siblings' children, held an acknowledged position in many Victorian households.⁴ Charlotte was placed in this familiar position and had automatically undertaken the care of her own parents and, at their request, she had taken the 'especial charge' of her brother's children when they became orphaned in 1857.⁵ Once in India, however, she discovered that her unmarried status and experience with growing children gave her a special endowment, with the result that she had been rapidly promoted to the rank of an 'old Auntie' in high demand. This esteemed status was something to be envied by legions of old maiden Aunts and other 'redundant women' in England.⁶

Her delight was expressed with a typical modest surprise, but Miss Tucker was no ordinary missionary who meekly followed her Saviour's call to missionary work. As a devout evangelical Christian, she had naturally offered special prayers for guidance, and these had seemingly been answered.⁷ However, well before her ultimate departure from England, she had pondered her likely position within white missionary society and the work she would be allowed to perform. She also contemplated the exciting prospect of writing for the enlightenment and conversion of Indian women and children to Christianity, a cause which her brothers had always encouraged and supported.

Charlotte had considered carefully her prospects of being accepted 'behind the pardah [sic]',⁸ by the Indian women she hoped to convert. She was reared with an

4 Asa Briggs, *Victorian People: A Reassessment of Persons and Themes, 1851-67*, University of Chicago Press, 1972, (revised edition), p. 13, and Rosemary Auchmuty, 'Victorian Spinsters', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, ANU, 1975, passim.

5 Robert Tudor Tucker, (1819-1857) was the magistrate at Futteypore and was killed during the Indian Mutiny. His children, Louis, Charles and Letitia had been sent back to live with the Tuckers at Upper Portland Place in London, in 1847. When their mother, Julia, abandoned them and went to live in North Devon with a Mr. Riddell, Charlotte was given the 'especial charge' of Robert Tucker's children, a duty which she willingly undertook. This information comes from personal information obtained in April 1991 from Mrs. Mary Wessell, a descendant of the Tucker family. Mrs Wessell has loaned Jane Tucker's diaries (MSS Eur Tucker Papers) to the India Office Library, London.

6 W.R. Greg wrote a controversial article 'Why Are Women Redundant?' in *National Review*, 15, 1862, pp. 434-60. Set against Greg's criteria, Miss Tucker was an aberrant female, having remained celibate and emigrated to India as a missionary.

7 CMT wrote to her sister, Laura, 'I have not come to my present decision in a hurried moment ... I made my Missionary project a subject of special prayer', Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

8 CMT intended to convert women confined behind the veil or pardah in the Zenána. No man could enter the Zenána, the women's quarters and many Christian women missionaries saw their special mission to India's women, particularly in Northern India. The Zenána was originally brought to India by Moslem invaders and had been assimilated into various Indian regional cultural systems.

insider's knowledge of India, gleaned from the reminiscences of her father and brothers who had worked many years for the East India Company and in the Civil Administration. Armed with this knowledge, she felt that she would be advantaged by factors which others may have considered a disadvantage. In England, for example, her age was sometimes viewed as an impediment; in India age commanded respect and conferred dignity — '[t]he Natives reverence grey hairs'.⁹ Her social connections were impeccable and the Tucker name well-known in administrative, missionary, and native Indian society.¹⁰ Her financial position was secure through income from writing and interest from patrimonial investments, and she considered this modest sum sufficient to live upon independently. She wrote: 'One ought to thank God for independent means; and I am very grateful to my honoured father also'.¹¹ Finally, her single, celibate status, whilst initially drawing expressions of pity from Indian women, aligned her in peculiar ways with India's holiest men and thus conferred spiritual merit: '[M]y being elderly and unmarried seemed to be giving an impression that I was a kind of saint or faqir'.¹²

All in all, the nominal advantages of remaining maiden 'Auntie Char' in leafy Hertfordshire were far outweighed by the new possibilities of a renewed writing career in India dedicated to the work of the Lord. Held back by overwhelming notions of duty during her parents' lifetime, in India she could begin to enjoy a degree of independence, have time for uninterrupted writing, and deploy her energies and skills in ways denied to her in England. India in 1875 offered Charlotte Maria Tucker the prospect of an emancipation distinct from most of her generation. Away from England, achieving personal autonomy through her own educational and dispensary work for "native" Indian women and children, Charlotte Maria Tucker—"A Lady of England"—inadvertently became something of a feminist.¹³

Miss Tucker's words at the head of this chapter give the overt impression that she was perfectly reconciled to the prospect of waiting passively for the 'advice of such an

Irene H. Barnes, *Behind the Pardah: A History of the CEMZS*, Marshall Brothers, London, 1902, p. 41.

9 CMT, letter, Dec. 4, 1876, in Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

10 An unidentified writer "E.L." wrote: 'In Memoriam Henry Carre Tucker', that the Tucker name 'was a household word with Natives of all classes, official and non-official, landowners and tenants, high and low, rich and poor'. *Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record*, c. 1876, Church Missionary Society Library, London, **Miscellaneous Papers**, Vol. I, No. 266, Paper 71, p. 7.

11 CMT allowed herself two hundred and seventy pounds per annum and estimated her expenses as a missionary would be one hundred and fifty five pounds per annum. She spent the balance on donations and endowments for Indian schools and missions. Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 215-6.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 249.

13 For discussions on the 'faces' of English feminism in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, see Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, Oxford University Press, 1992, Introduction, and Philippa Levine, *Feminist Lives in Victorian England: Private Roles and Public Commitment*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1990, particularly, Chapter 1 "Configuring Feminism Historically".

Apostolic man'. Such patience was declared both a virtue and a strength by men and women of strict Evangelical schooling and regarded as much a part of the missionary's Christian armour as energetic proselytising.¹⁴ Charlotte Tucker's energetic family were probably surprised, if not amused, however, to read that she had described herself as waiting 'passively', for she was renowned as a woman of 'intense vigour and energy ... force and vitality'.¹⁵ She was determined to be 'useful' in her age and generation.¹⁶

Charlotte's zealous energy was sometimes thought disruptive to the serenity of those around her.¹⁷ In youth, and in her middle 'dutiful' years, this intense need for activity and tendency to organise was a trait to be both admired and avoided.¹⁸ Her immediate family experienced this energy as a kind of breezy, brisk earnestness rather than the gentle 'sweet ordering' prescribed for women by Victorian sage and critic, John Ruskin. One niece recalled that 'her individuality and disregard of the world's opinion [was] so strongly marked.'¹⁹ Others found her variously resolute, persevering, affectionate, reserved, demonstrative, untidy, methodical, vehement, impulsive, unyielding yet tender, 'severe, yet frisky'.²⁰ With hindsight we can see this organising drive as a symptom of frustrated intellect and under-utilised capacities.

A Special Kind of Literary Daughter

Charlotte Maria Tucker was born in Friern Hatch, near Barnet in Hertfordshire, on 8 May 1821, to Jane Tucker (née Boswell) and Henry St. George Tucker.²¹ Jane Boswell, Charlotte Maria's mother, was one of six daughters and had grown up in Edinburgh. Jane's father, Robert Boswell, was a writer to the signet and had a connection with James Boswell, Dr. Johnson's biographer, and he was a minister of a small religious sect, possibly an offshoot of the Scottish Presbyterian Church. Mr Boswell apparently died in tragic circumstances a short time before his daughter Jane

14 c.f. Ian Bradley's chapter 'A Mission to the Heathen', in *A Call To Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1976, pp. 74-93.

15 Charlotte's brother, Henry Carre Tucker, (1812-1876), was also credited as having prodigious amounts of energy by his colleague in India, Sir Robert Montgomery: 'His energy was extraordinary. It was mainly through him that the district [Azimgurgh] was pierced with roads, bridges, and schoolhouses'. *Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record*, loc. cit., p. 7.

16 Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

17 There are some notable examples given of Miss Tucker's unbounded energy and occasional insensitivity. One memorable incident was Charlotte Tucker's insistence on soothing a friend's headache by singing and playing her guitar. No gentle protestation could persuade her to stop, so sure was she of her remedy. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

18 Giberne tactfully suggested that 'the will to do good and to help others was abundantly present; only she did not always find the right mode.' *Ibid.*,

19 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

21 See Genealogical Table in Appendix.

married Henry St. George Tucker. According to Charlotte Tucker's biography, Robert Boswell had fallen dead when preaching on the transience of human existence.²² Jane Boswell had no substantial dowry to offer but her mother, now a genteel Scottish widow with few financial resources, ensured that her daughters were married and well settled. Jane Boswell, 'a gentle and beautiful girl' at the age of twenty-one in 1811, married Henry St. George Tucker, a well-travelled, ambitious, and diligent colonial servant already aged over forty.²³

Henry Tucker returned to England in late 1810, ostensibly to retire from the Indian service and restore his broken health.²⁴ His career in India was not unblemished, but his sexual misdeeds were kept well out of the public eye, and, presumably from Mrs. Boswell. As far as his new wife was concerned, Tucker was an amiable companion and a good father. Jane Tucker kept diaries between 1812 and 1844, referring to him always as 'My beloved Husband'.²⁵ Early in 1812 the newly-weds travelled back together to India where Henry Tucker took up a senior position as Secretary in the Colonial and Financial department of the Bengal Administration and Jane Tucker assumed the role of English *mem-sahib*. Their sojourn in Calcutta was relatively brief. After recurring bouts of fever and the birth of two children, Henry Carre in 1812, and Sibella Jane in 1814, Jane Tucker's health began to fail. The climate was difficult and Jane evidently missed her family greatly. In 1815, the Tuckers returned to Edinburgh where they lived in Charlotte Square until 1820.²⁶

²² Family lore, as related to Agnes Giberne, recalled that Robert Boswell dropped dead as he quoted the Biblical text which begins: 'All flesh is as grass'. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²³ According to Giberne, five of Mrs Boswell's six daughters married. One married Mr Egerton of the High Court of Calcutta; one married General Carnegie; one married a Mr. Anderson, and one married Dr. Roxburgh. Only Veronica about whom nothing is known, remained unmarried. *Ibid.*

²⁴ Henry St. George Tucker was imprisoned in 1806 for an attempted rape of Mrs. Dorothea Simpson, wife of one of his business partners. The case is mentioned briefly in Tucker's entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. XIX, Smith Elder & Co, London, 1909, p. 1208, and does not appear in Sir John Kaye's biography, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry St. George Tucker: Late Accountant-General of Bengal and Chairman of the East India Company*, Richard Bentley, London, 1854. I have written a paper on this case and the conspiracy of silence which followed. This paper was delivered at the Biennial Conference of the Australasian Modern British History Association held at the University of Melbourne in February 1995. The paper is entitled "'A Case of No Common Kind": Henry St. George Tucker's Attempted Rape of an English Lady of India'.

²⁵ Jane Tucker, Diaries, MSS Eur. Tucker Papers, The British Library, India Office Library and Records, London, *passim*.

²⁶ Jane Tucker's diaries are predominantly records of her children's births, their health and habits, and the family's social life. They present an intimate view of home-life, child rearing and current medical practices used for curing tropical ailments and childhood illnesses. The early diaries were written in Calcutta and the later diaries record, amongst a wealth of domestic information, details of the Tuckers' efforts to have Henry St. George Tucker elected as a director, and then Chairman, of the East India Company. (Henceforth referred to as J. Tucker Diary).

Henry St. George Tucker's career with the civil administration in Bengal had been a meritorious one. In 1790, he worked as a secretary for Sir William Jones, the famed jurist and Sankritist. In 1792, he became a member of the Bengal Civil Service where he showed a flair for financial administration. In 1800, he was promoted to the position of Accountant-Generalship, or Finance Minister of the civil administration. In 1804, he left briefly to join a private firm of merchant accountants, Messrs. Cockerell, Traill, Palmer & Company. In Calcutta in 1806, his upward promotion was interrupted briefly when he was charged and convicted of an attempted rape. He was fined 4000 rupees and imprisoned for six months in the Common Gaol of Calcutta, the so-called 'Black Hole of Calcutta'.

This assault apparently had little affect upon Tucker's future and fortunes.²⁷ On his release in mid-1806, Tucker accepted an invitation from Lord Cornwallis to re-join the government administration and was sent immediately to Upper India to investigate and report upon the "Expediency of Permanent Settlement in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces in the North West". Ironically, his daughter, Charlotte, eventually lived in these same, ceded, parts of Northern India. Tucker later accepted the Accountant-Generalship of Bengal. His career resumed its course: in 1807 he was appointed as commissioner for settlement of disputed territories, in 1808 he became a member of the Board of Review, and in 1809, he rose to the post of Secretary in the Public Department. Charlotte Tucker's typically cautious Victorian biographer makes no mention of Tucker's conviction for attempted rape. In all probability, Charlotte, like her mother, was never aware of her father's sullied past or, perhaps, like victims of abuse, she refused to accept and sublimated the knowledge.²⁸ To Charlotte, Henry St. George Tucker remained 'darling papa', an heroic figure who, during her lifetime, had risen twice to the chairmanship of the East India Company, Britain's most powerful private trading institution. Charlotte's biographer stated that Charlotte had a 'passionate love' for her father, surpassed only by the bond which developed between her and her younger sister, Laura.²⁹

²⁷ When Henry St. George Tucker returned to England in 1811, the Court of Directors of the East India Company presented him with a donation of fifty thousand rupees as a mark of their approbation. *Dictionary of National Biography*, *ibid.*, p. 1208.

²⁸ As I have argued in my paper, cited above, Tucker's colleagues kept completely silent upon Tucker's crime. Kaye studiously ignored it in 1854, and the disclosure came many years later in the *DNB* in 1909.

²⁹ At the time of the biography's publication in 1895, most would not have questioned Giberne's use of the word 'passionate' [p. 14]. The word was indicative of the intense nature of Charlotte's familial relationships.

Charlotte Maria was the sixth child in a family which, by the time her youngest sister, Clara Elizabeth, was born in 1830, numbered ten living children.³⁰ In 1821, the Tucker s moved south from Edinburgh to Friern Hatch, and then to London to the elegantly fashionable address of No.3 Upper Portland Place, to be closer to Tucker's work and his colleagues.³¹



Plate 14: A view of Portland and Upper Portland Place, designed by James Adam in 1776.³²

Charlotte had four sisters: Sibella, Frances (Fanny), Laura and Clara. The entry in her mother's diary for 8 May 1821, noted Charlotte Maria's birth:

[my] little Charlotte was born in a hurry on the 8th 1 PM before the Dr. had time to come. She was born about 1 in the forenoon and is a pretty healthy little creature - very well made and very good.³³

Charlotte Maria Tucker remained in a hurry for the rest of her life. Almost without exception those who knew her remarked upon her zest for life—her springing step, her

30 The family comprised Henry Carre (b.1812), Sibella (b. 1814), Frances (b. 1816), George William (B. 1817 d. 1817), Robert Tudor (B. 1819), Charlotte Maria (b. 1821), St. George (b. 1823), Dorothea Laura, known as Laura (b. 1825), William, (b. 1827), Charlton Nassau (b. 1829), Clara (b. 1830). (See Genealogy in Appendix).

31 Directors of the East India Company led a somewhat 'clannish' existence, living as close neighbours in the elegant environs of Cavendish Square, Hanover Square, Harley Street and Upper Portland Place. John Michael Bourne, 'The Civil and Military Patronage of the East India Company, 1784-1858', Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Leicester, 1977, p. 62.

32 John Summerson, *Georgian London*, Barrie & Jenkins, London, 1988, (new edition), p. 149. (Drawing from *A Picturesque Tour Through London and Westminster, 1792-1801*, Malton, London, 1800).

33 J. Tucker, *Diary*, May 8, 1821.

musical and artistic talents, her energy and need for activity. As she grew up, Charlotte channelled her energies into writing and teaching her younger siblings, and organising small entertainments for her family who had settled in well amongst London's mercantile elite. Her mother lovingly chronicled details of each child's development. She diligently noted Charlotte's size—'a small looking infant but very healthy'—remarking brightly upon her daughter's infant chatter and first steps.³⁴

Diary entries show that in 1822, Charlotte was the darling of her mother and the rest of the family—'I am in excellent health and enjoy everything, for no babe has thrived better than Charlotte - She has run alone since 12 months old and she chatters everything [sic] - people are all amused to see such a lovely blue-eyed witch running alone'.³⁵ At the age of two her mother noted that Charlotte was 'so musical it is quite astonishing - dances in perfect time and calls for any tune she fancies and is not contented with any other'.³⁶ In 1824, she noted that 'Dearest Charlotte talks at a great rate and is a very lovely engaging child'.³⁷ According to her doting mother, Charlotte was 'the darling of everyone - a delight ... Tucker [her father] can refuse her nothing'.³⁸ She and her brothers and sisters were encouraged at every step to enjoy music, and her mother ensured that music teachers and dancing masters were brought to the house to tutor them all in the essential social arts. Her 'formal' education began with instruction from her father and was continued by governesses. This traditional system of female education initiated by the benevolent patriarch, was supposed to equip her for life. As Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace has noted in her recent study of a triptych of earlier literary women, 'Literary daughters are special kinds of daughters, women who adapt themselves to both a familial and a literary hierarchy'.³⁹ Charlotte Maria Tucker learned early to defer to her father in return for his love, and, in this respect, she was truly her father's daughter.⁴⁰

The Tucker girls were educated at home as Henry St. George Tucker had a profound objection to schools for girls. It was he who determined that this daughter's education should be channelled towards artistic and religious subjects. He had sworn

³⁴ J. Tucker, *Diary*, November 1821.

³⁵ J. Tucker, *Diary*, July 1822.

³⁶ J. Tucker, *Diary*, March 1823.

³⁷ J. Tucker, *Diary*, September 1824.

³⁸ J. Tucker, *Diary*, March, 1823.

³⁹ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity*, Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1991, p. 11.

⁴⁰ *The Iron Mask*, an unpublished play written in 1839 when Charlotte was eighteen was 'Dedicated with the fondest esteem and affection, to her beloved father, Henry St. George Tucker, to whom she is indebted for the outline of the characters and the the plot, by the Author, Charlotte Maria Tucker'. Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

himself 'never to marry any girl who had been educated at school',⁴¹ and his gentle and adoring wife never challenged his judgement in the matter. His prejudice against girls' schools was never explained to them which was, in part, no doubt linked to the prevailing notion that young girls were more easily polluted by impure influences than were their hardier brothers who were sent away to boarding school.⁴² The Tucker girls' circumscribed education was typical for many young gentlewomen in similar situations. The deliberate restriction of daughters' education for the benefit of sons reflected not only Tucker's personal philosophy, but also middle and upper-class practice.

An ideal education for a young lady, according to historian Nigel Cross, was supposed to fit her 'for nothing more than a life of household management' and provide her with an array of 'amateur accomplishments'.⁴³ They were at least fortunate that their father was a highly literate man with poetic and classical sensibilities. He encouraged their studies at home and at an early age, each child was taught drawing, music, French translation, reading, geography, vocabulary, grammar and spelling, although only the boys received instruction in mathematics and Latin. According to Jane Tucker's diary, 'each day they write.'⁴⁴ Charlotte evidently loved reading and had a good memory for what she read; her mother thought that she was often 'too much absorbed in her books'.⁴⁵ She made a telling comment that both daughters, Charlotte and Sibella, 'promise to be great assistants and comforts to us and I see no better children or more anxious dear girls, to do right.'⁴⁶

When Charlotte's brothers were old enough they were sent to Addiscombe and Haileybury Schools to be groomed for entry into the Civil Service and the East India Company. The intention was to follow in their esteemed father's footsteps.⁴⁷ The boys' departures caused Mrs. Tucker great heartache but she consoled herself in the knowledge that she always had her daughters at home for company. What caused greater difficulty

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴² Henry St. George Tucker had attended boarding school briefly in London in the 1780s before he sailed for India. He admitted happily to reading novels and romances which 'inflamed his mind with images of gorgeous palaces in the East', but may have also have been well aware of erotic or salacious literature which was, so to speak, available under the counter. Recalling his own experience at boarding school may have sobered him. Some thought that girls attending boarding schools were particularly prey to this type of literature which, according to Iain McCalman, was thrown over the walls or smuggled into girls' schools where it was devoured with unlady-like relish. Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993, Chapter 10.

⁴³ Nigel Cross, *The Common Writers: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 165.

⁴⁴ J. Tucker, *Diary*, March 1825.

⁴⁵ J. Tucker, *Diary*, Feb. 1830.

⁴⁶ J. Tucker, *Diary*, June 1825.

⁴⁷ Bourne, re: Haileybury and Addiscombe schools, *Thesis, op. cit.*, pp. 213-296.

and discomfort was finding the money to pay for the boys' schooling. The fees regularly pushed family finances into *distress* and Henry Tucker expected the whole family to practice individual economies to allow his sons an unimpeded progress. Again, his philosophy was typically justified on the basis that the Tucker boys required a sound education to prepare them for entry into the commercial world. Moreover, attendance at these particular schools provided Charlotte's brothers and, as it transpired, Charlotte, with valuable social contacts. She was later able to utilise some of her brothers' resultant social networks in arranging her own missionary career in India.

Charlotte Tucker and her sisters, unlike the more fortunate boys, were forced to rely upon the limited educational accomplishments of a daily governess and, like other women of her generation, she never openly criticised her parents for restricting her education. Charlotte appeared to take for granted that her brothers somehow 'deserved' a better education.⁴⁸ The issue of education was carefully skirted in Giberne's biography, but it is evident that Charlotte's education was frequently sacrificed by 'a paucity of masters'.⁴⁹ Charlotte and her sisters made the best of the situation and she, in particular, was determined to stretch her intellectual abilities by reading as widely as she could, using her energies and talents for private study to enhance her general knowledge. Her restricted curriculum was reinforced and justified at every step by a rigorous religious education. Henry St. George Tucker refused to entertain the idea that his daughters might need or desire a broader education for their own intellectual benefit.

Even as a young child, Charlotte was determined to become better educated. Learning was something which she clearly enjoyed; she read at a very early age and began to write simple stories to entertain her younger siblings. Later, her desire to learn drew her towards subjects other than literature, religion, and music and, like many of her generation, she became fascinated by the 'new' sciences of natural history and rudimentary chemistry. She acquired facts from her father's journals chiefly concerning science and geography, and she practised imparting "useful knowledge" to a captive audience—her younger brothers and sisters. Her brother, St. George, remembered that Charlotte had given him his first geography lessons; she devised a system of active learning through play, dividing the garden in Portland Place into countries: 'By that means' he recalled, 'I learnt that England was in the north-west corner of Europe'.⁵⁰ This desire to impart knowledge never left the writer. It is evident, for example, in Charlotte's

⁴⁸ Cf. Daphne Bennett, *Emily Davies and The Liberation of Women, 1839-1921*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1990. According to Bennett, '[t]here was a great deal about Emily's life that she would have liked to be different, but it never occurred to her to criticise her parents for her lack of education, though the longing to be well-taught never left her'. *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁴⁹ Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

popular books, *The Rambles of a Rat* and *Fairy Know-A-Bit*, and many others she wrote for children.⁵¹ In a partial reference to her circumscribed education, Charlotte Tucker looked back on her home schooling and autodidactic tendencies in a letter written to one of her nieces many years later:

No one can do as much for us in the way of education as we can do for ourselves. A willing mind is like a steam engine, and carried one on famously. When I was young my beloved parents did not feel able to give us many masters. We knew that, and it made us more anxious to profit by what we had.⁵²

The Ties of Home

The Tuckers were renowned for entertaining which was an important way of cultivating contacts and gaining influence within the company and beyond. Lunches and dinners were frequent at No. 3 Upper Portland Place, and it seems that Henry St. George was sought after not only because of his position in the company, but also because of 'his personal attractiveness'.⁵³ Reciprocal hospitality was expected among the 'East India' set, but its provision was costly and meant that the Tuckers' shows of generosity often almost outstripped their income. Despite his years in India in government administration, and with the East India Company, Henry St. George Tucker was not a wealthy man when compared with other Indian 'nabobs'.⁵⁴ An ever-increasing and dependent family consumed large portions of his annual salary, and Mrs. Tucker's elderly mother, Mrs Boswell, also lived with them. Sir John Kaye, Henry St. George's biographer as well as Charlotte's own biographer, both suggested that Tucker's generosity within the family circle and outlays for household entertainment and domestic servants, kept him in a position of relative economic distress.⁵⁵ After expending large sums on education for the

⁵¹ In the preface of *The Rambles of A Rat*, written in 1857, Charlotte Tucker acknowledged that her story had been inspired by an article that she had read on rats in the *Quarterly Review*. *Fairy Know-A-Bit* was published by Nelson in 1865.

⁵² Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁵³ Giberne makes this generous statement about Tucker's personal attributes, *ibid.*, p. 62. Bourne provides another rather more acute perspective. Tucker was in a position to distribute lucrative appointments and was thus 'a man of great social influence'. The East India Company Directors' interest was constantly solicited via personal contact and letters 'couched in the most servile language [even] allowing for the conventions of the age.' Bourne, *Thesis, op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁵⁴ Bourne describes how some directors made enormous fortunes out of their Indian 'adventuring', while others managed only to amass modest ones. Thirty thousand pounds was the average estate for civilians in the East India Company, although Sir Francis Baring, the banker, left a personal fortune in excess of two million pounds. Bourne, *ibid.*, p. 38. In his will, Henry St. George Tucker left each daughter two hundred pounds and his surviving sons, fifteen hundred pounds each.

⁵⁵ Charlotte's biographer reported that Mr. Tucker 'gave away about one-quarter of his whole capital, a sum amounting to several thousands of pounds, to help a relative in a great emergency', *ibid.*, p. 18. An indication of Mr. Tucker's generosity may be gauged by reports that in 1813-14, Directors

children, on governesses, drawing teachers, dancing masters and public school school fees,⁵⁶ the Tucker's remaining resources were spent on the maintenance of a large and hospitable household.

The Tuckers took holidays at home and abroad, they attended concerts and balls, and entertained on a regular basis.⁵⁷ Jane Tucker, always keenly ambitious for her husband, was anxious to keep up appearances with his influential colleagues in the East India Company. Favoured guests recalled luncheons and dinner parties at which Mrs. Tucker, 'with the exceptional boundlessness of old-fashioned hospitality and kindness' provided 'ad libitum ... all the best things of the season'.⁵⁸ Those who remembered the younger Charlotte and Fanny Tucker, recalled impressions of both home daughters 'being too incessantly though quietly busy about everything that promoted the happiness of other people.' Francis Outram, a regular visitor, described Charlotte Tucker as having 'much of the Romantic in her composition'. His description is illuminating since it points to Charlotte's idealistic and passionate nature, and yet in the same breath, he admitted to admiring also the 'beautiful self-restraint' which Charlotte and her sister imposed upon themselves to please their mother.⁵⁹ Even in her thirties, Charlotte had always to negotiate carefully to write, to perform works of philanthropy and ultimately, to remove herself from the Tucker's outside entertainments.

The Tuckers spent lavishly in the early 1820s when Henry St. George Tucker first offered himself for election to the Board of Directors of the East India Company.⁶⁰ Known as the 'canvass', this drawn-out and complicated process of entertainment and lobbying was necessary to ensure success in the all-important ballot which had to be unanimous. The expense temporarily placed family finances in great jeopardy. Jane Tucker's diaries reveal her frustration and annoyance at her husband's failure to gain election after so much time, effort, and family capital had been spent on company

of the East India Company were paid about three hundred pounds per annum. Chairmen were paid two hundred pounds per annum extra. Bourne, *Thesis, op. cit.*, p. 54.

56 Addiscombe School charged a £200 bond at entry and £65 per term. At Haileybury College the term fees were 50 guineas per boy, i.e. 200 guineas per annum. Bourne, *Thesis, loc. cit.*, p. 219, 275.

57 For example, the Tuckers gave a memorable fancy dress ball in the spring of 1835 at which the Duke of Wellington was present. Charlotte appeared as a young girl of fourteen as 'the star of the morning', wearing a white muslin dress and a star on her forehead. Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

58 Recollection of Sir Francis Outram, son of General Sir James Outram, *ibid.*, p. 113.

59 *Ibid.*, .

60 To be eligible for election, an individual had to possess a minimum of £2000 of East India stock. Tucker had returned to England with a golden handshake of 50,000 rupees, equivalent to £6000 in 1810. John William Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry St. George Tucker, Late Accountant-General of Bengal and Chairman of the East India Company*, Richard Bentley, London, 1854, p. 265.

entertainments.⁶¹ The expense, however, was eventually justified. In 1826, five years after Charlotte was born, Henry St. George Tucker was elected. He was elected chairman of the Court of Directors in 1834 and was elected for a second time in 1847. His position was then enormously prestigious, affording him opportunities for patronage which partially compensated for the lack of large deposits in the bank.⁶²

Finances eased in 1840 when Henry St. George Tucker was left a substantial legacy of £10,000 by a close friend, Mr. Anthony Brough. Another legacy from an old friend, Mr Andrew Maclew, of a 'lakh of rupees' (that is, one hundred thousand rupees or £12,000), ensured that each child was also left an undisclosed sum which was invested for them.⁶³ This money formed the basis of Charlotte Maria Tucker's independent income and eventual estate. Notwithstanding these sums, Charlotte Tucker was always anxious about money matters, stemming from the days when genteel poverty threatened the prestige and appearances of the family. Charlotte Tucker wrote to her sister recalling her parents' entertainments as a social duty she *had* to perform:

those formal affairs ... Slow concerns those great dinner-parties were a kind of social duty, which cost much trouble and expense, and gave not much pleasure. A kind of very stiff jelly, with not many strawberries.⁶⁴

Entertaining guests remained her main duty although she was desperate to perform "useful" work outside the home; her gastronomic metaphor betrayed her frustrations.

Charlotte remembered her father, although flattered by his guests' attention, as often weighed down by the costs of keeping up his elevated position as Chairman of the Company, and she clearly recognised that the cost of maintaining appearances involved far more than money. Anxieties about money and the 'social fetters' of position and rank were, she believed, impediments to her own father's spiritual path. In India in 1880, when she enjoyed a simple and devoted life and was living well within her own modest budget, she wrote to her sister: 'O Laura, when one throws aside these trammels of social position, one feels like a horse taken out of harness, and set free in a nice green meadow.'⁶⁵ She clearly exulted in her freedom and independence.

⁶¹ Bourne has estimated that it took civilians an average of 7 years to be elected to the Board. *Thesis, op. cit.*, pp. 24-27.

⁶² Bourne has written that 'the Directors of the East India Company were a force to be reckoned with, a situation which their control of a vast patronage in a society hungry for genteel employment both created and guaranteed'. *Op. cit.*, p. 55. All appointments rested with the Court of Directors.

⁶³ Kaye, *op. cit.*, pp. 531-2.

⁶⁴ Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁶⁵ Charlotte wrote: 'When we were young we had the worry of a footboy at our heels,— it was thought suitable for our position'. Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

The mode of Christian philanthropy that Charlotte Tucker followed throughout her own life did not come from her father, but from Robert Tudor and Henry Carre, the brothers she idolised. Henry St. George Tucker was not a noted philanthropist though he apparently donated smallish sums to local causes through the parish funds of Holy Trinity Church in Marylebone where the family attended regularly.⁶⁶ Sir John William Kaye, historiographer of India and Tucker's loyal biographer, attempted to inflate Tucker's image on this score. He stated that Tucker, 'watched with the deepest interest the progress of those great social questions which involved the physical and moral welfare of large masses of the working classes; but he did not, whilst the cry of the Factory children was sounding in his ears, close his eyes to the appealing looks of the poor cross-sweeper who stood at the corner of the street'.⁶⁷ Thus we learn that Tucker believed in the *idea* of philanthropy and even wrote letters of support to Lord Shaftesbury, but how much he actually donated remains uncertain.

Following his own rigid principles and early East India Company policy which refused most missionary licenses and firmly opposed interference with native populations' religious sensibilities, Tucker refused to give any funds for missionary ventures in India. He vehemently opposed such activity and was in conflict with a number of former directors, including the Evangelicals, Charles Grant and Robert Thornton, who had been anxious to recruit chaplains to promote the evangelisation of India.⁶⁸ Robert Tudor and Henry Carre Tucker parted from their father on this issue and contributed large portions of income to pay for the translation of Christian works into vernacular Indian dialects and support individual missionary schools. Charlotte went to India knowing that had her father lived, he would have completely opposed her evangelical mission.

⁶⁶ Charlotte's elder sister Sibella, married Frederick Hamilton, the young Curate of Holy Trinity Church.

⁶⁷ Kaye also noted that Tucker wrote to Lord Ashley on the Factory question in March 1844. *Op. cit.*, p. 535.

⁶⁸ Bourne identified Charles Grant, Ross Mangles, William Melville, William Money and Robert Thornton as Evangelical Directors of the East India Company. See, Appendix 4, 'Alphabetical List of the Directors of the East India Company 1784-1858', *Thesis, op. cit.*, pp. 313-322. There is a considerable body of writing on the issue of missionary activities in India for this period. See, for example, Ainslie T. Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1962, particularly Chapter VII, 'Advocate of Religious and Social Change', pp. 141-157, Ainslie T. Embree, 'Christianity and the state in Victorian India: confrontation and collaboration', in R.W. Davies & R.J. Helmstadter, (eds.), *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian Society: Essays in Honor of R.K. Webb*, Routledge, London & New York, 1992, pp. 151-165, Stuart Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries, 1789-1858*, Sutton Courtenay Press, U.K. 1984, G.A. Oddie, 'White Rajas: Protestant Missionaries and Imperial Rules in India to 1947', in *"Imperialisms": Explorations in European Expansion and Empire*, Deryck M. Schreuder (ed.), Highland Press, Canberra, 1991, pp. 79-100.

Robert Tudor Tucker was killed in the Indian Mutiny in June 1857, but before his death he had actively supported the evangelical missionary push into the sub-continent. Charlotte wrote a sketch of her own brother's life for the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, [SPCK], entitled *Futteypore; or, The City of Victory* in 1858, in which she recorded that he preached and ministered to the 'Natives' and established a school in which to teach them.⁶⁹ He was then a judge in Futteypore and had taken an early part in establishing the Christian Literature Society for India, becoming its Honorary Secretary before his death. Charlotte reported that he 'gave to the Missionary cause at the rate of forty pounds monthly' and added that, 'shrinking from ostentation he had never given his name on these occasions'.⁷⁰ Henry Carre Tucker also devoted himself to missionary work in Benares. Charlotte wrote to her publishers, Gall & Inglis, at the height of the Mutiny, about some of her books that she wanted sent to him to allow him to continue his work:

My brother has taken a bolder part in upholding Missions, and spreading religious literature, than almost any one else in the country; ... Benares ... with a population of 180,000, is one of the most wicked places in India, a "holy city", a stronghold of fanaticism.⁷¹

Agnes Giberne, who knew of the Tucker family through her own Indian and religious connections,⁷² proclaimed Henry Carre Tucker's evangelising work in Benares as 'a task of helping forward in every possible way Missionary work in India.' She stated that his mission '[w]as a species of "Christian revenge" for the death of his brother Robert and the sufferings of his countrymen.'⁷³ In Giberne's assessment, mid-nineteenth century missionary work engendered elements of Christian militancy and her bizarre description appeared as a reminder of earlier battles fought against Infidel forces as well as the Indian Mutiny. According to an account of his death at Futteypore, Robert Tucker had met the enemy with his bible in one hand. In Charlotte's mind, her brother had acted as a latter-day martyr for the cause of Christianity in India.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ British Library Catalogue lists this publication as *Futteypoor, or the City of Victory*, By A.L.O.E., London, 1859.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁷¹ Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

⁷² Agnes Giberne (1845-1939), was born in Belgaum, India. Her father was Major Charles Giberne. Little is known about her. She was a well-published author in her own right, particularly in the fields of astronomy and popular science, but she also wrote books for children and novels. One title, unfortunately unavailable, *Miss Devreux, Spinster: A Study in Development*, Longmans & Co., London, 1891, may have provided insights into her life. See entry, Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, Isobel Grundy, (eds.), *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English*, B. T. Batsford & Co. London, 1990, p. 422, and *British Library Catalogue* list, pp. 576-582.

⁷³ Giberne, *ibid.*, p. 111.

⁷⁴ *From Sepoy to Subedar: being the Life and Adventures of Sudebar Sita Ram, a Native Officer of the Bengal Army, written and Related by Himself*, (tr. by Lieutenant-Colonel Norgate), [new ed]. by James Lunt, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1970, (First publ. in English 1873). Robert

Charlotte was ambitious: 'What a proud ambitious little creature I was! I have a pretty vivid recollection of my own character in youth. I should have liked to climb high and be famous'.⁷⁵ She admitted this to her niece, but as a young woman her chief desire was to be a published writer. Writing years later as a missionary from India in 1876, Charlotte confessed to Laura that she had never imagined that she would follow her brothers' work in India:

What an extraordinary and somewhat romantic position I am in, for an elderly lady, who in her youth hardly ever stirred from a London home! How amazed we should have been when we were girls, if we could have known that I was to find my home in an Oriental palace—afar from all Europeans—and itinerate [sic] a little in heathen villages!⁷⁶

Religious Life and Good Works

As a member of a genteel family, Charlotte was instructed in the doctrines of the Church of England and her Christian duties at home and in church. She was receptive to religious instruction and was brought up in 'an atmosphere of kindness, of gentleness, of unselfish thought for others, of generosity, of high principle, and of most real religion.'⁷⁷ Her biographer insisted upon using the term 'real religion' to make it abundantly clear that the Tucker family were active Christians, not merely church-attending 'social' Christians.

In letters to her sister, Laura, Charlotte often referred to the days when they went to Holy Trinity together, and through her sister Sibella's marriage, their links with that particular church were strong. Holy Trinity Church, shown overleaf, was a fashionable place of worship. Designed by Sir John Soane in the mid-1820s, the church was situated in a prosperous neighbourhood and the Tucker's close neighbour and friend, Lord Glenelg attended regularly.⁷⁸ He was the son of Charles Grant, a former Chairman of the East India Company and one of the Evangelicals who had, unlike Henry St. George Tucker, encouraged missionaries to India. Both Grant's, father and son, believed that it was Britain's duty to 'introduce useful knowledge and religious and moral improvement

Tucker had shot 'over a dozen of his assailants with the pistol he carried in his other hand', p. 23. This fact was glossed over.

⁷⁵ Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁷⁶ CMT to Laura Hamilton, Dec. 8, 1876, *ibid.*, p. 249. Charlotte used the term 'itinerate' in the sense of a travelling preacher.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁷⁸ Lord Glenelg, [1778-1866], Colonial Secretary from 1835 to 1839.

to the native inhabitants of India'.⁷⁹ Glenelg, a respected and powerful man, may have been one of the influences on Charlotte Tucker's religious thinking, but if conversations and ideas were exchanged between Charlotte and the Colonial Secretary after church services, no record has survived.

According to her biographer, before departing for India, Charlotte 'ruthlessly' destroyed a mass of her papers which might have illuminated her spiritual growth as a young woman. Charlotte became a practising Evangelical in the late 1840s, but what hastened her final conversion is difficult to pinpoint. The "call to seriousness" was common amongst men and women of Charlotte's generation, especially amongst those with a wish to live a life of usefulness and Christian purpose.⁸⁰



Plate 15: Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone, 1826-27.⁸¹

By the age of fifteen, in 1836, Charlotte had already experienced a 'conversion experience', a religious phenomenon described in many contemporary autobiographies

⁷⁹ Ian Bradley, *A Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1975, p. 82.

⁸⁰ See Bradley's chapter, 'The Cult of Conduct', *ibid.*, pp. 145-155.

⁸¹ Summerson, *op. cit.*, p. 216. [From an engraving by T. H. Shepherd, *Metropolitan Improvements*, 1827-30.]

and hagiographic biographies of the period.⁸² She wrote vividly of her emotions: 'when the feeling of being His — of indeed having the Saviour as *my own* Saviour, came upon me like a flood of daylight'.⁸³

Charlotte and her sister, Fanny, made a pact in 1847 to give up outside entertainments. On this issue, the Tuckers did not oppose their daughters. Knowing that Charlotte and Fanny were thoughtful and mature women, it would have been difficult to resist such serious decisions of conscience. Charlotte enjoyed certain elements of outside social life but one suspects that she had always lived vicariously through her parents and successful brothers. She was said by Giberne to appreciate 'intercourse with polished and intellectual minds', and yet Charlotte never assumed an intellectual stance in her published work or her private letters. Whether this reticence stemmed from conventional strains of feminine modesty or fears that her lack of classical education would be exposed, is difficult to assess. In this notable respect, Charlotte Maria Tucker differed completely from Felicia Skene who, despite a home education, enjoyed challenging debates and published a number of theological treatises.

From her brother Henry's perspective, Charlotte 'was very sociable, lively and threw her whole heart into the kindly entertaining of guests of all ages'.⁸⁴ Beneath this bright façade however, she was apparently feeling a growing uneasiness about 'certain kinds of amusement', most notably, attendance at concerts and the theatre.⁸⁵ Although she was capable of and occasionally enjoyed bright and witty conversation, such behaviour was enjoined on all women in polite society—to refuse to enjoy company would have offended her parents and their influential guests.⁸⁶ Often the only escape for women who found social gatherings tedious was invalidism.⁸⁷ Charlotte and Fanny did ultimately refuse to attend balls and soirees. In proof of their resolve, they even gave up the opportunity, in 1848, to hear Jenny Lind perform in concert.⁸⁸

At one level Charlotte's decision to forego some of life's social pleasures appeared to have been made because of an overpowering sense of conscience. Her

82 F.K. Prochaska has noted many examples in his study, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980. See Select Bibliography, 'Contemporary Women's Memoirs, Autobiographies, Biographies etc.,' pp. 274-289.

83 Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

84 *Ibid.*, pp. 62-64.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 66.

86 For a perceptive study of nineteenth-century family conventions and social manners, see Lenore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season*, London, 1973.

87 Florence Nightingale provides one good example of a woman who used this excuse.

88 The sisters apparently selflessly gave their tickets to their less fortunate but highly musical cousin, Fanny Lauzun. *Ibid.*, p. 69. Jenny Lind, "The Swedish Nightingale", later turned to evangelical religion and renounced her theatrical fame.

deliberate refusal to participate in outside activities conformed to self-imposed evangelical strictures. Yet her increased family responsibilities also contributed. She cared for her ageing parents, and her grandmother, Mrs Boswell, and the unexpected arrival from India in 1847 of 'the Robins', her brother Robert's children, imposed as many practical constraints to social life as did any burgeoning evangelical conscience. In a letter dated March 31, 1865, Charlotte wrote to her God-daughter Leila, 'I wish that I could come and pay you a visit; but I do not see how I am to leave Grandmamma as long as dear Aunt Fanny is an invalid. I seem wanted at home'.⁸⁹

In her early years, Charlotte was described by the Reverend Robert Clark as a 'warm Churchwoman, belonging to the 'Evangelical' school of thought'. She was sincerely attached to the Church of England, firmly believing that the teaching of the Church of England, as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer and in the Thirty-Nine Articles, were accordance with the Word of God'.⁹⁰ Although she became an evangelical, had she been asked to categorise her religious allegiances in youth, Charlotte would probably have said that by her early training she leaned towards the so-called "Broad" Church of England.⁹¹ This branch of the Anglican Church was relatively tolerant, theologically-speaking, drawing inspiration chiefly from the Bible and works of practical piety. The brand of High Church ritualism to which Felicia Skene was drawn, was regarded by many, including Dr. Thomas Arnold, an apostle of Broad Church thinking, as 'the fanatasm of foolery'. Charlotte Tucker agreed completely with Dr. Arnold on this issue, and was later greatly distressed when she encountered any vestige of High Church ritualism in sermons and ceremonials in India.⁹²

Other Christian denominations only became more tolerable to her in later years. Giberne remarked that as Charlotte grew older, 'she became more and more large-hearted towards those she differed with on minor [religious] points. ... This side of her appeared more distinctly, and developed more markedly, in India, than in her secluded English

⁸⁹ Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 176, p. 377.

⁹¹ By the mid-nineteenth century, the Anglican Church was divided into three distinct schisms: High, Low, and Broad Church. Much has been written on the divisions but for the purposes of this study, a simplified analysis is offered. The High Church 'stood for rigorous adherence to the observance of the church, support for the idea of the establishment, and dislike of dissent'. The Low Church emphasised 'the Lutheran concept of justification by faith and the necessity for personal conversion ... and the need for constant study of the Bible ... Low Churchman generally referred to themselves as Evangelicals.' The Broad Church sat somewhere in between the two extremes. Broad Church followers believed in the importance of the Bible, 'they emphasized those matters which all Church of England Christians held in common and not those that separated High from Low ... [they] objected to Roman Catholicism, ... and believed in the importance of good works'. Robert Lee Wolff, *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York and London, 1977, pp. 17-22.

⁹² Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

home'.⁹³ While her devotion to the Church of England remained paramount, Charlotte admitted that she often drew inspiration for her writing from the sermons of the famous Baptist orator, Charles Haddon Spurgeon.⁹⁴ As an author, she was prepared to admit that Spurgeon's sermons provided inspiration. His writings were, as she recorded, 'full of apt illustrations ... I find them so useful in my writings; and I know hardly any other work which helps me so much'.⁹⁵



Plate 16: Frontispiece, *Claudia*, by A.L.O.E, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1880 edition.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁹⁴ Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a renowned Baptist preacher who drew thousands to hear his sermons in the 1840s and 1850s. For pen portraits of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, see Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Part 1, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1970 (2nd edition), pp. 417-421, and K. S. Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1963, particularly p. 64.

⁹⁵ Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

Charlotte's works of fiction relied heavily upon allegory as a literary tool and contained many 'apt illustrations' but, like Hesba Stretton, Charlotte also relied upon the skill of illustrators such as Hablott Browne and Dalzeil to convey her message.

The illustration above is taken from one of Charlotte's popular novels, *Claudia*, first published in 1869. Claudia Hartswood is portrayed as a self-confident and eponymous heroine who is completely deceived by the dishonest and artful Helena Vane. Helena, we learn, disguised herself as a novice simply to gain entry to the Hartswoods' house to steal some valuable documents held in safe custody by Mr Hartswood, a trusted and respected lawyer. Claudia, thinking that she alone can "rescue" the novice, falls for the pseudo-nun's claim that she is desperate to escape from the convent and decides to reclaim the young woman from the "tentacles" of Rome. She hides Helena in the house giving her sanctuary from the convent, she provides the runaway with a set of her own best clothes and suitable reading matter, notably a history of the life of Luther, in the hope of hastening Helena's return to the outside world and the true Protestant faith.⁹⁶

As the author pointed out to her readers, Claudia's crusade was marred by her pride and stubborn refusal to question her own motives, and as a consequence, Mr Hartswood is almost ruined by his daughter's foolish exploits. Helena is humbled by her foolishness. A.L.O.E.'s voice interjects: 'It is by such experience of failure and error that Christians learn their own sinfulness and weakness, and are led to exchange self-confidence for lowly trust in a strength not their own'.⁹⁷ The plot is far-fetched but in *Claudia*, Charlotte revealed much about her own attitude towards the Church of Rome as well as her belief in humanity's innate propensity for self-deceit and pride. She outlined her object in the book's preface which almost quivers with humility:

The object which I have had before me in writing the following tale, has been to show the distinction between the intellectual and the spiritual, and the insufficiency of mental powers, even though they be of a high order, either to render their possessor wise unto salvation, or to make him a fit instrument to accomplish a lofty mission among men. I am painfully aware that I have not carried out my design as I would have wished, that my work is a very imperfect one ; but I humbly commend it to Him whose blessing alone can render it useful, and who knows under what sense of weakness I have penned my little story.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *Claudia*, by A.L.O.E., Thomas Nelson & Sons, London, 1880, (first published 1869).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁹⁸ A.L.O.E., Preface, *Claudia*.

The story was not so little—it stretched to 301 pages—and A.L.O.E. simultaneously called upon evangelical passion and cleverly exploited sectarian feelings, drawing upon contemporary anti-Roman Catholic and anti-sisterhood sentiment.⁹⁹

As Susan P. Casteras has argued, the ‘rescued-nun syndrome’ was a popular fictional and artistic genre in the 1860s;¹⁰⁰ she maintains that the image of the novice encouraged a voyeuristic view of covent life and also played upon the Protestant fear of Catholicism.¹⁰¹ A.L.O.E. may have flatly denied such assertions but the illustrated frontispiece of the novice was arguably as tantalising as it was misleading. A.L.O.E.’s readers must have enjoyed the tale, evidenced by the regular reissues by the publisher, Thomas Nelson. *Claudia* was still in print in the 1880s.

As long as Charlotte wrote quietly at home in the parlour and in her own room, her parents, particularly her father, raised no objections. Charlotte produced poetry, hymns, three-act plays, and tales, all of which remained unheard and unread by anyone outside the family circle until after her father’s death. The entire Tucker family was well aware of Charlotte’s literary inclinations, but she kept her future literary intentions quiet while formulating her own ideas about her future. Writing for charity was regarded as a ladylike and genteel occupation, and Charlotte always intended to donate the proceeds of her writing to favoured charities and causes. On one notable occasion, she arranged for the private printing of one of her hymns which had been set to music written by her cousin, Fanny Launzun. This printing was performed—she wrote—‘by converted Jews, and the entire profits devoted to the Society for the Conversion of the Jews’. ‘This’, she informed her sister Sibella, ‘will be a little offering from us both to one of the holiest of causes.’¹⁰²

Charlotte endured her father’s resistance to her publishing her literary works, but Charlotte and her sister Fanny, both edging towards thirty, still had to contend with their

⁹⁹ Charlotte Tucker produced an earlier novel with an anti-Catholic sub-theme, *Idols of the Heart* by A.L.O.E. published by Thomas Nelson & Sons, London, in 1859. The plot revolved around a maiden aunt’s suspicions of her young sister-in-law’s alleged “Romish” tendencies. As I noted earlier, Mudie’s Circulating Library provided readers with a range of anti-Catholic novels which were extremely popular in some circles.

¹⁰⁰ Susan P. Casteras, ‘Virgin Vows: The Early Victorian Artists’ Portrayal of Nuns and Novices’, in Gail Malmgreen (ed.), *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930*, Croom Helm, London, 1986, pp. 129-160. She notes that Harriet Martineau had a success with her novelette, *Sister Anna’s Probation*, in 1861-62 when it was serialised in *Once A Week*, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

¹⁰¹ There was a run of anti-sacerdotalist fiction from the 1830s onwards including those Geoffrey Best describes as ‘naughty nun’ stories. This included the celebrated popular ‘pornographic’ tale, *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*. G.F.A. Best, ‘Popular Protestantism in Victorian Britain’, in *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain: Essays in honour of George Kitson Clark*, edited by Robert Robson, G. Bell & Sons, London, 1967, pp. 115-142, p. 132.

¹⁰² CMT to Sibella Hamilton, Aug. 1, 1864. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

mother's objections to philanthropic work. It was years before they were finally permitted to visit the sick in the Asylum Ward at the Marylebone Workhouse. Henry St. George Tucker was ingenuous in his suggestion that his only objection to this kind of work was that his daughters might contract infectious diseases.¹⁰³ Sir Francis Outram, a friend and contemporary of the sisters, remembered their difficulties and recalled:

Mrs. Tucker could not quite keep pace with the new-fashioned unconventionalities of "young-lady work" in London : and one of the object-sermons which most impressed me in my College days, was the beautiful self-restraint which these two sisters—no longer young—imposed upon themselves, in deference to their aged Mother's wishes, in regard to that outside work which inclination, or one might say conviction, as well as opportunity and qualifications, impelled them to participate in.¹⁰⁴

Charlotte's extraordinary 'self-restraint' and filial obedience was revered by Agnes Giberne, who suggested that Charlotte interpreted her parents' objections to her philanthropic convictions as a sign of "Divine Will". Modern readers may take another view of such stoic acceptance.

Patience, and the application of gentle but persistent pressure, ensured that Charlotte eventually won the right to 'undertake more of definite outdoor work among the poor'. Her parents gave their reluctant consent in 1851.¹⁰⁵ Giberne, exercising the tact expected from a Victorian biographer, did not discuss how vehemently Henry St. George Tucker was opposed to his daughter's suggestion of visiting the Marylebone poorhouse. Charlotte revealed far more when she inserted the events into *Claudia*. When Claudia Hartswood asked for permission to teach in a Ragged School, her enraged father replied:

Humbug and nonsense. No daughter of mine shall go hunting about London alleys and lanes to pick up barefooted beggars out of the gutter.

Claudia, like her creator, accepted her father's decision (for the time being), rationalising that it was all part of Providence's plan for her future:

I am not yet worthy to be allowed to work in the vineyard ... but, perhaps, if I watch and wait, some little quiet corner may be found even for me. ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Tucker's fears were not entirely fanciful. Contagious diseases such as tuberculosis and typhus could be easily contracted in such confined institutions. Cf. Charles Dickens's account of Esther Summerson, the philanthropic heroine of *Bleak House*, [1852], who contracted smallpox after contact with London's 'great unwashed'.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁰⁵ Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁶ A.L.O.E. *Claudia, A Tale*, T. Nelson & Son, London, 1859, pp. 241-2.

Charlotte wrote knowledgeably of the 'struggle with the enemy within' in her early books, particularly in *The Giant Killer, or, The Battle that All Must Fight*, and she was ready to admit to her family that she had a strong will. As an elderly woman, she recalled her own pride and ambition, both of which she regarded as sins. Her books for young and old dealt often with taming the spirit; her enemies were personified in the figures of giants—sloth, hate, untruth, selfishness and pride—and her hero was the Knight Fides who conquered all. A.L.O.E.'s illustrator, Dalzeil, provided hideous and terrifying images to match Charlotte's imaginary demons. The book was originally published in 1853, and its title drew deliberately upon the earlier childrens' tale, *Jack, the Giant Killer*.¹⁰⁷ Such gruesome images as it contained would almost certainly be censored in the modern print media.¹⁰⁸ In the 1850s and 1860s they were intended to remain indelible in the minds of her readers.



Plate 17. Front cover, *The Giant Killer; or, The Battle Which All Must Fight* by A.L.O.E.¹⁰⁹

- ¹⁰⁷ This set of images are taken from *The Giant Killer; or, The Battle Which All Must Fight*, by A.L.O.E., given by loving parents to their child. The inscription on my own copy of reads, 'Dorothea Helen, With her father and mother's love, July 4th, 1894'.
- ¹⁰⁸ Many television cartoons designed for childrens' viewing often feature monsters and much gratuitous violence. However, as with illustrated Victorian didactic fiction, today's cartoon heroes and heroines usually vanquish evil-doers in the end.
- ¹⁰⁹ *The Giant Killer, or, The Battle Which All Must Fight* by A.L.O.E., Thomas Nelson & Son, London, 1853.

GIANT UNTRUTH.



THE GIANT UNTRUTH.

GIANT SELFISHNESS.



THE DEATH OF SELFISHNESS.

GIANT SLOTH.



FIDES SLAYS THE GIANT SLOTH.

GIANT PRIDE.



THE FIGHT WITH GIANT PRIDE.

The sombre, didactic side of Charlotte's nature erupts in these images of which she personally approved.¹¹⁰ Flashes of fun and playfulness which her nieces and nephews recalled, surfaced occasionally in her fiction, but it was often overshadowed by an overriding moral tone which doused any tendency to frivolity. Psychologists might argue that Charlotte recognised her own enemies and projected them for her readers' scrutiny and conscience. As an Evangelical, she regularly examined her own soul, perhaps aspiring through her writing and extraordinary pen name—A Lady of England—to act as the nation's conscience.

Sisterly Love

Charlotte relied upon the companionship of her sisters for intimate female friendships. She, Fanny, and Laura were particularly close as children and remained so all their lives. Henry St. George Tucker had actively discouraged suitors and Sibella was the only daughter who married whilst her father was still alive. Charlotte's biographer suggests that Charlotte had at least one proposal as a 'girl', but her parents apparently disapproved of her only suitor who was deemed to be 'unsuitable'.¹¹¹ What Charlotte thought was not recorded and her reticence on the subject is both a telling and infuriating silence. As far as we know, Charlotte's sexuality remained untested: eventually, in the missionary community, she celebrated her independence, celibacy and single status. Only then in these later years did she allude to 'different kinds of love'. Without speaking of lesbianism, she observed 'there is a passion, not a love, which I have known some women to have for another. That is not wholesome; it is a passion, not love'.¹¹² If her physical and emotional desires were sublimated, her energies were redirected in the love she lavished upon her family.¹¹³ There is no doubt that the Tucker sisters presented a tight 'sisterly circle' which was broken, ironically, by two brothers. Frederick Hamilton married Sibella in 1849, and Laura, Charlotte's favourite sister, received a proposal of marriage from Frederick's elder brother, Otho, and was married in 1852.

¹¹⁰ See Footnote 121, this Chapter.

¹¹¹ *Giberne*, p. 64.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 447. Lesbianism was not a term used in society at the time, although Sapphic love was recognised in mythical accounts and was alluded to in poetry.

¹¹³ Martha Vicinus has noted that women's religious commitment and devotion to others' welfare was regarded as the highest expression of women's self-sacrificing nature. Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women. Work, and Community for Single Women - 1850-1920*, Virago, London 1985, p. 36. In her capacity as an honorary missionary, Charlotte Tucker had many women friends but no 'special' friend. She lived without a permanent companion in Batala [in India], although, like most missionaries, she had a small retinue of servants.

For Charlotte, the family circle was paramount and her parents' wishes remained sacrosanct. She had few friends outside the family circle and, again, this isolated state was encouraged by Henry St. George Tucker who, like many fathers, had convinced her that he had her best interests at heart. In turn, Charlotte constantly sought his approval.¹¹⁴ Kowalski-Wallace's contemporary analysis of three more famous literary father-daughter relationships, of Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth and Fanny Burney, would maintain that Charlotte Tucker willingly allowed her father to constrain her development.¹¹⁵ Charlotte's obliging acceptance of prevailing social values and ideals, reinforced by her mother and by the church—'the single discourse, a Christian discourse that recognises woman first and foremost as a daughter'—was undeniable.¹¹⁶ She was compliant but she would have been unwilling or unable to admit that it was her father who restricted her life. Her own ardent belief in filial duty would have made that admission impossible, and it was she who had made an independent commitment to evangelicalism. Her father's influence was more insidious; in Mary Poovey's view, powerful fathers like Henry St. George Tucker were tyrants, albeit benevolent, who blocked their daughters' 'social and psychological autonomy'.¹¹⁷ The secure and embracing comfort of family did not prevent Charlotte, despite her protestations of happiness, from occasionally lapsing into what she called 'very low spirits'.¹¹⁸

'Low spirits' was a Victorian euphemism for depression and many women suffered in ways which manifested in psychosomatic illness and general ill-health.¹¹⁹ Charlotte chose to suffer in silence and carry the burden of depression alone. Reading between the lines when she wrote to her sister, it seems that she felt responsible for maintaining the family's collective happiness and so refused to allow any trace of depression to emerge and spoil the illusion of tranquility. Writing to Laura in 1850, she remarked stoically, 'I am determined to complain of nothing, for I am so overloaded with blessings'. While her brothers, George and William, and William's new wife, the former

114 Elizabeth Kowalski-Wallace, writing on Fanny Burney's relationship with her father, has pointed to feminine complicity in compounding patriarchal structures. Charlotte Maria Tucker followed this pattern. She idolised her father and as a literary daughter, she adapted herself to both a 'familial and literary hierarchy'. She sought Tucker's approval for her own writing and yet quietly accepted his refusal to allow her to publish. Giberne, *ibid.*, p. 30. Cf. Kowalski-Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

115 Kowalski-Wallace, *ibid.*, p. 23.

116 *Ibid.*

117 Mary Poovey, "Fathers and Daughters: The Trauma of Growing Up Female", *Women and Literature*, ed. Janet Todd, Vol. II, Holmes and Meier, New York, 1981, p. 56, cited in *ibid.*, p. 10.

118 Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

119 M. Jeanne Peterson refers to the frequent bouts of depression suffered by Angie Acland, Felicia Skene's friend, and by some women in the Paget's social circle. As Peterson reminds, the subject of mental illness and depression was not discussed openly. Peterson, *Family, Love and Work*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

Mme. Latour, were enjoying summer's freedom in Paris, she continued on a self-abnegating note:

I should like to think that our dear trio are enjoying themselves as much at Paris as I am at home. I hope and trust that we may all have such a happy winter together, when "Love's shining circlet" has all its gems complete except the dear Indian absentees.¹²⁰

Charlotte looked for "useful work" to fill her life with meaning and raise her spirits and turned increasingly towards the uplifting and diverting qualities of religion for inspiration. Charlotte's brothers were in India — Henry Carre had departed in 1831 and Robert Tudor in 1835— and two of her sisters were married by 1850, and thus Charlotte and her elder sister Fanny were both marked by acquaintances as the home daughters. At the comparatively young age of twenty six, Charlotte had already come to terms with her ascribed position. Charlotte remained at home to care for her parents and grandmother, and eventually to care for Fanny who became terminally ill. Although there were servants and a supporting network of close family, Charlotte's home life was strictly enforced and her commitment never wavered, even if she was frustrated in her desire to be useful outside the home.

Many of Charlotte's letters reveal instances when she refused invitations to attend social gatherings because of her family responsibilities. By 1847, she had the additional responsibility of caring for the 'Robins'—Letitia, Charles and Louis Tucker. This care was more of a joy than a duty, firstly because she adored her brother and secondly, because she regarded this role as one of surrogate mother. When Letitia died in India in 1865, the result of erysipelas, Charlotte grieved as bitterly for her 'own darling girl' as any mother would have done. She had acted as a mother to the Tucker 'orphans' since their mother had abandoned her marriage to Robert Tucker.¹²¹ Charlotte became even more a parent after Robert Tucker was killed in 1857. This role was not a deliberate choice of 'single blessedness', but the inevitable result of Charlotte's dutiful obedience and love of family.

Charlotte's relationship with her sisters was extraordinarily close and her sisterly affection often verged on the passionate. Her terms of endearment poured out in short notes and in lengthy and detailed correspondence. She referred to her sister Laura after Laura's marriage to Otho Hamilton, as 'dear Wifey'. Prior to that Charlotte had often

¹²⁰ CMT to Laura Hamilton, Oct. 18, 1850. Giberne, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-7.

¹²¹ See Genealogical Table in Appendices.

addressed her as 'my darling' and 'my lovely, loving, and lovable Laura'.¹²² The letters were carefully preserved as keepsakes and memorials.

Historians of women's history have encountered many instances of sisterly closeness and intimacy—the Austen sisters, the Pagets, the Potters, the Macdonald sisters, the Wilsons, Susan and Anna Warner, Harriet Beecher Stowe and her half-sister Isabella Beecher Hooker, Catherine Maria Sedgwick and Susan Ann, her sister-in-law, Agnes and Elizabeth Strickland, Louisa May Alcott, Berthe Morisot—English, American and French sisters of the period—all shared an intimate world of sisterliness and continuous correspondence.¹²³ Felicia Skene and Hesba Stretton were no exceptions, and Charlotte Maria Tucker shared and drew upon the support engendered by such sisterly solidarity.

Affection was genuinely reciprocated. Charlotte showered loving thoughts upon her sisters but in their turn, they comforted her when, for example, she was in obvious distress having learned of the death of Letitia. In her deepest grief, Charlotte summoned her faith and wrote to Laura:

Darling—

[M]y own darling Letitia! ... I do not grudge her to Him; but oh, what a wealth of love I have lost in that one young heart! ... I dare say that I will hear from you tomorrow; but it is a relief to me to write now to you, who were so kind and dear to her.¹²⁴

The Tucker sisters shared the burden and understood Charlotte's pain. Fanny wrote to Laura describing Charlotte's state of mind:

My own dearest Laura,

Your dear letters have been soothing to our Charlotte, and have helped to remind her of the mercies mingled with the bereavement. The sure sweet

¹²² CMT to Laura, Aug. 1855, CMT to Laura, July 12, 1848. Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 104, p. 68.

¹²³ There is much written on the subject of sisters; sisters are revealed in biography, in literary studies, and in feminist critiques. See, for example, Barbara Caine, *Destined to be Wives: The Sisters of Beatrice Webb*, Oxford University Press, 1986, Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage, Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*, Oxford University Press, 1984, M. Jeanne Peterson, *Family, Love, and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1989, *Hannah More*, Jeremy & Margaret Collingwood, Lion Publishing Corporation, 1990, Ina Taylor, *Victorian Sisters: The Remarkable Macdonald Women and the Great Men They Inspired*, Alder & Alder, Bethesda, 1987, Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, Harvard University Press, 1990, Martha Westwater, *The Wilson Sisters: A Biographical Study of Upper Middle-Class Victorian Life*, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio, 1984, *Jane Austen's Letters*, edited by Deirdre Le Faye, Oxford University Press, 1995.

¹²⁴ CMT to Laura Hamilton, Jan. 21, 1866, Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

hope that her darling [Letitia] is safe, and for ever happy, has been her strong consolation; and God is mercifully supporting her, I am thankful to say. Last Sunday she went both to Church and to the Workhouse.

I am thankful to be near her, to minister to her, —but wish I were a better comforter, such as *you* would have been, dear'.¹²⁵

By the end of 1866, Charlotte had recovered some of her vigour and returned to her writing. She confided to Laura that the previous year had aged her and that she had lost her strength and spirit. She wrote, 'I am not poorly, though I look thin; I think that I am stronger in health and firmer in spirit now than I have been almost all this trying year; and for this I am thankful'.¹²⁶ Within weeks of writing this letter, she was back in touch with her publishers, Gall and Inglis, complaining about an illustration appearing in one of her books.¹²⁷

It was chiefly in Laura that Charlotte confided throughout her lifetime, and it was to her that Charlotte formally announced her missionary intentions. Unlike Felicia Skene with her High Church leanings, Charlotte Tucker had never contemplated joining a religious sisterhood either in youth or middle years, and yet, ironically, she joined a sisterhood, the Church of England Zenána Mission, which sent only unmarried women to work in India.

The Highest and Noblest of Callings

In the battle idiom applied to late nineteenth-century missionary endeavours, "Heroine" was the popular honorific for women who spread the word of the Lord in dangerous foreign lands. In literature and myth, heroines, like their male counterparts, faced danger and displayed courage and, as we know, Charlotte Maria Tucker readily adopted the metaphor of battle in her allegorical tale of Christian warfare, *The Giant Killer; or, The Battle Which All Must Fight*.¹²⁸ The term 'heroine' must have appealed greatly to A.L.O.E.'s literary imagination even though nineteenth-century Christian heroines, unlike her own sword-wielding hero Fides, were supposed to exhibit pacifist

¹²⁵ Fanny Tucker to Laura Hamilton, *ibid.*

¹²⁶ CMT to Laura Hamilton, Oct. 6, 1866, *ibid.*, p. 136.

¹²⁷ CMT to Leila Hamilton (her niece), Nov. 2, 1866. Charlotte complained that the illustrator had made a man 'look like a bear'. Mr Inglis, her publisher, had requested that the picture be altered, but to no avail. He eventually dismissed the illustrator. Charlotte wrote that she was 'a little sorry for the poor man' but confessed, 'I am rather glad that he is not to illustrate my books any more'. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹²⁸ In the Preface to *The Giant Killer*, A.L.O.E. referred to her tale as 'descriptions of the Christian warfare'.

qualities—‘the sweet womanly graces of quietness, patience, carefulness, undistractedness and simplicity’.¹²⁹ Facing peril was not mentioned specifically by the Church of England Missionary Society in its list of essential qualities, but most regarded facing danger as one of the accepted tests of faith. During ‘the golden age of missionary travel’, danger presented chiefly through contracting a fatal illness or outbreaks of hostility and violence, but such risks were accepted as ‘merely an occupational hazard by the thousands of [missionary] women sent away’.¹³⁰

Charlotte Tucker knew about danger from her brothers’ experiences in India. However, like all who laboured willingly in darkest England, she firmly believed that she had been called by God to missionary work. In her view, her task was to bring suitable Christian literature to her Indian ‘sisters’. In a sisterly supplication written in March 1875, Charlotte provided a lucid explanation for her decision. She begged for Laura’s approval: ‘Do not grudge me, dear one, to the work for which my soul yearns.’ She indicated, in case her sister objected, that she had already devoted herself to the Zenána Mission at Holy Communion, but added in a note of independence, ‘I am bound by no vows. I go out *free*, an Honorary Agent of the Society’.

I will give you a few reasons for my thinking it desirable for me to go to the East:—

1. In that corner of the Vineyard, the labourers are indeed fearfully few; scarcely *one* to many, many thousands of perishing heathen.
2. Not one Englishwoman in ten is so well suited to bear heat as myself.
3. Not one woman in a hundred at least is so free from home ties as myself.
4. There is a terrible want of suitable literature for Indian women. If God enabled me still to use my pen, an intimate knowledge of even *one* Zenána might be an immense help to me in writing for my Indian sisters.

Is not Missionary work of all work the highest? I fear that I am presumptuous in coming forward; but it seems as if my dear Lord were calling me to it; and my heart says “Here am I; send me”.¹³¹

This was an accurate diagnosis of her own condition. Charlotte Tucker was completely free to undertake the work; she had the benefit of a secure and independent income from publishing royalties as A.L.O.E., and a small invested inheritance. More important was the fact that she was without any domestic ties and this, above all, hastened her eventual decision to escape from the comfortable tedium of genteel, domestic confinement. Her family had taken her abiding presence in their midst for granted, and

¹²⁹ Barnes, *Behind the Pardah*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹³⁰ Jane Robinson has made a bibliographic study of missionary accounts written by women and comes to this conclusion in her chapter ‘Quite Safe Here with Jesus’. Jane Robinson, *Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, p. 153.

¹³¹ CMT to Laura Hamilton, March 24, 1875, *ibid*, p. 177.

Charlotte had kept her own counsel until she confided in her elder brother, Henry Carre Tucker. When she plucked up courage to announce her decision to the entire family, 'the announcement fell among friends and relatives like the bursting of a bomb. Apparently, nobody had dreamt of such a career for 'Auntie Char'.¹³²

As a popular, yet pseudonymous writer, Charlotte Maria Tucker had always been known to her readers as "A Lady of England", but it came as a surprise to her readers when she left England to become a missionary "Lady of India". In a study of A.L.O.E.'s contribution to Victorian juvenile fiction, Jacqueline Bratton described Charlotte's move as 'an astonishing decision', but given the Tuckers' long association with India, the decision was not so startling.¹³³ Perhaps more astonishing was that the Missionary Society accepted a woman of fifty-four when applicants over the age of thirty were generally refused. Charlotte had opted for a career which involved teaching, preaching, writing and Zenána visiting, in a hot and hostile environment — it was not a mission to be undertaken lightly. At an age when most upper-middle class Englishmen thought of comfortable retirement, she contemplated an enormous transition.

A.L.O.E had provided readers in England with an unmistakable evangelical message and she proposed to do the same in India. Her carefully planned strategy was to approach her project directly believing that her influence as a writer was of critical importance. She knew well that her 'voice' as an evangelical had been heard. She contacted the Church Missionary Society and broached her plans in correspondence and discussions with a senior committee member, Sir William Hill. The full committee of the Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society considered her plans in April 1875, and after due consideration, her offer was accepted.¹³⁴ The Committee noted in the Minutes:

Miss C M Tucker accepted as an Honorary Missionary. Sir William Hill stated that he had had a correspondence with Miss C M Tucker, well known as the authoress A.L.O.E. who wished to go to India as a Missionary; Miss Tucker proposed being an Honorary Agent of the Society, paying her own expenses, etc., She preferred North India, where she thought she might perhaps have more influence, and the climate would be more suited for her health.

Resolved thankfully to accept Miss Tucker's services as an Honorary Missionary Agent, and acknowledge with grateful feelings an instance of a lady of an independent fortune giving up all for Christ. Miss Tucker to be appointed to Umritsar [sic].¹³⁵

¹³² *Ibid*, p. 176.

¹³³ J.S. Bratton, *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction*, Croom Helm, London, 1989, passim, esp. pp. 69-79

¹³⁴ For a history of the Zenana Missions, see Barnes, *Behind the Pardah*, op. cit.,

¹³⁵ *Minutes of the Committee of the Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society*, Wednesday, 7 April, 1875. Minute Book 4 May-7 April 1875, Archives, Interserve [Medical

Charlotte had formulated her Indian plans and written her application from the rural seclusion of her brother's home. In leafy Binfield she filled the role of provincial philanthropist, as a typical 'Lady Bountiful',¹³⁶ visiting the local poor and sick of the village and running, quite unsuccessfully, a night-school for village boys. She was relieved when the local Curate agreed to take them off her hands. She wrote: 'I have no scruple in letting him do so, for I believe it is far better for the boys. They are too much for poor old Char.'¹³⁷ Her routine varied little. Mornings were taken up with writing what she called her 'little books' and afternoons were reserved for the ritual of social calling, 'at homes', or visiting the poor armed with a bag of hand-painted religious tracts and texts.¹³⁸ Evenings were spent at the piano playing for her nieces and nephews or dancing with the children. She embroidered, knitted and sewed but evidently did not enjoy these tasks. To enliven the proceedings—one suspects primarily for her own benefit—she read Shakespeare to the assembled family while she furiously crocheted complicated anti-macassars.¹³⁹

Charlotte Tucker struggled with her restlessness in order to remain an 'ennobling influence' in the lives of her young nieces and nephews, although their frequent interruptions to her writing must have been a constant source of frustration¹⁴⁰ A niece, oblivious to her aunt's plight at the time, praised Charlotte's patient forbearance: 'Where she did not approve, she was usually silent. Long years of home-discipline gave [her] humility, self-control, and gentleness'.¹⁴¹ The cost of such silence must have been high. Unlike Florence Nightingale who poured anger and frustration into her novel, *Cassandra*, Charlotte Tucker left no evidence that she was desperately unhappy in her family's company.¹⁴² Miss Nightingale complained of the 'petty grinding tyranny of a good

Missionaries), Kennington, London. Committee members — Mrs. Mary Jane Kinnaird, Mrs. Heatherly, Mrs. Matheson, Mrs. Sandys, Mrs. Hassell, Mrs. J.H. Fergusson, Mrs. Gilmore, Mrs. Moore, Mrs. D. Fraser, Mrs. R. Trotter, Mrs. Lang, Mrs. Maltby, Sir William Hill and Major Black. The Indian Female Normal School was absorbed into the CEZMS in 1880.

136 See Jessica Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful: Women of the Landed Classes and Rural Philanthropy', *Victorian Studies*, Winter, Vol. 30, No. 2, 1987, pp. 183-209 for a critical assessment of the paternalist role of rural philanthropic women. For a revision of the historical international trivialization of women's philanthropic role, see Introduction, Kathleen D. McCarthy, (ed.), in *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy and Power*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1990, pp. 1-31.

137 CMT to Laura, Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

138 The rituals of calling and 'at homes' are discussed by Davidoff in *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season*, *op. cit.*,

139 Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

140 J.S. Mill had suggested to Harriet Taylor in 1832 that one of women's special gifts was to be an 'ennobling influence' within the family and to 'beautify life; to cultivate ... all her faculties of mind ... to diffuse beauty, elegance and truth everywhere'.

141 Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

142 Florence Nightingale wrote *Cassandra* in 1852. The novel was printed privately. In this she complained bitterly about the 'vacuity' of the domestic life of the genteel woman.

English family'.¹⁴³ For "A Lady of England" to have admitted openly to unhappiness in her domestic circle would have been unthinkable. Half-joking, yet half-serious, Charlotte Tucker hinted obliquely at the difficulties and undesirability of being a 'fourth lady' in the 'Curate's dear little house' by referring to her dependency upon the continued hospitality of her ageing brother and sister. She had no home of her own and was fearful of becoming superfluous in both households.

Above all, Charlotte's letter of explanation and intent conveys an overwhelming sense of relief; she had decided to grasp independence before it was too late. Her motive was undeniably religious in inspiration, yet other submerged tensions and fears were expressed. Catharine Sedgwick, another influential and unmarried, evangelical writer, had also understood the spinster's diminishing role.¹⁴⁴ She recognised that the maiden aunt, 'the primary object of affection to many [became] by degrees to be first to none'.¹⁴⁵ Charlotte Tucker recognised such danger yet was afraid of being thought selfish. She implored Laura: 'I hope ... you will not let your tender affection make you wish to keep me back from the work for our dear Lord. ... I can leave you rich in the devoted love of your children. Thank God, *you* are not lonely'.¹⁴⁶

The letter rehearsed the feelings of similarly placed women.¹⁴⁷ Charlotte Tucker's vision was made abundantly clear to her sister and defied rebuttal, and while some may argue that Charlotte Tucker's move was merely an extension of parochial philanthropy, it also involved a search for personal and religious fulfilment. In her study of single women, Martha Vicinus sensitively explores the intractable dilemma faced by women like Charlotte Tucker, noting that upper and middle class women found freedom

Cecil Woodham-Smith, *Florence Nightingale 1820-1910*, The Reprint Society, London, 1952, p. 72.

¹⁴³ In a private note headed 'Butchered to make a Roman Holiday', written in 1851, Florence Nightingale had also commented that 'Women don't consider themselves as human beings at all'. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁴⁴ Catharine Sedgwick (1789-1867), was one of America's first professional "women of letters". She was her country's most popular female novelist in the 1820s and 1830s and her works attracted a large following in England. Her last novel, *Married or Single*, 1857, was written to lessen the stigma placed on the term, "old maid". Her family life is discussed by Steven Mintz in his study, *A Prison of Expectations: The Family in Victorian Culture*, New York University Press, New York & London, 1983. See also, Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*, Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1984, esp. pp. 239-249 in which Kelley discusses Sedgwick's defence of unmarried women and her close relationship with her brothers and their families.

¹⁴⁵ Mintz, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

¹⁴⁶ Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

¹⁴⁷ Beatrice Webb, though younger than Charlotte Tucker, recorded in her diary: 'Tomorrow will begin a new time for me. A life of noble usefulness lies before me, with the freest of conditions if I am really equal to them. ... Shall I sink under the very vastness of my opportunities — or rise to them and fulfil them?' [Nov. 26 1884]. Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie (eds.), *The Diary of Beatrice Webb, Volume One; 1874-1892: Glitter All Around and Darkness Within*, Virago, London, 1986, p. 126.

by “‘emigrating” to the East End’ to undertake social work.¹⁴⁸ Women such as Charlotte Tucker, ‘were ... intensely conflicted [sic], deeply emotional women, seeking to fulfill themselves in ways which society would approve while still moving beyond its limitations’.¹⁴⁹ Charlotte’s destruction of personal papers lends credence to this argument; in a personal rite of passage she deliberately destroyed evidence of her ‘old life’ before beginning her journey to a new one. By joining a crusade to help ‘the many-millions’ suffering Indian sisters escape from what she and others believed was the tyranny and imprisonment of the Zenána, she held that she was undertaking God’s work.¹⁵⁰ Charlotte Tucker’s escape went beyond the ‘colonial metaphor’; she rejected England and chose to “emigrate” to India to complete her mission.¹⁵¹

Traveller’s Tales

Learning Hindi was one signal of Charlotte’s resolve to ‘orientalize’ herself. Reading the Granth and the Koran was another. While she never completely mastered speaking the language, she added to her extensive vocabulary in a typically disciplined fashion and she eventually imported many “Indian” words into her writing. Lessons began in England with her brother Henry Carre Tucker, and by the time she sailed on the s.s. *Strathclyde* in the second week of October 1875, Charlotte had added Urdu to her intensive language program. On the voyage out she practised short sentences on the Christian ayahs [Indian nursemaids] who could, according to Charlotte’s letters, understand her faltering attempts at reading her Hindustani bible. She wrote: ‘I am bribing one of them to teach me’.¹⁵²

Before she left for India, however, Charlotte had one remaining domestic mission related to the ‘Robins’. Charles ‘Charley’ Tucker, her nephew, had moved permanently to Canada and she went to see him before her real work began, knowing in her heart that she would never see him again. In May 1875, accompanied by Louis, the other surviving ‘Robin’, she travelled to Toronto to spend time with them both. Here she had her photograph taken, the only photograph of her which survives. Shown below, Charlotte sits in a formal pose. Her expression is serious and resolute and on this occasion she took particular care with her dress; she was renowned for caring little about

148 Vicinus, ‘The Revolt Against Redundancy’, in *Independent Women*, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

149 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

150 Barnes, *Behind the Pardah*, provides a highly eurocentric description of the Zenána., *op. cit.*, pp. 40-53.

151 Vicinus, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

152 Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

her appearance. Her niece recalled her thus: 'I remember her [Charlotte] in the days of crinolines, standing straight and dignified in her plain dress without the least attempt at fulness of the skirt ... Her individuality and disregard of the world's opinion were so strongly marked'.¹⁵³



C. M. Tucker

Plate 23. Charlotte Maria Tucker - A Lady of England - Canada, 1875. ¹⁵⁴

Her journey to Canada was the first part of breaking free. Crossing the Atlantic contemplating the future, she wrote to the family through her sister, Laura, describing her wonder at seeing massive icebergs and sailing through 'the midst of *thousands* upon *thousands* of masses of floating ice'. She sailed on the s.s *Nova Scotia*, a large emigrant ship carrying 600 souls from where she wrote: 'There are a great many emigrants on board, but I doubt it will be easy for me to communicate with them'.¹⁵⁵ Her comment was ironic given that she was about to travel to a place where communication would be even more difficult.

¹⁵³ Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

¹⁵⁴ Photograph with Charlotte Tucker's signature appears before the title page of Giberne's biography.

¹⁵⁵ CMT to Laura Hamilton, 'On board the Nova Scotia', May 27, 1875. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

Her farewells said to the 'Robins', she sailed back to England to make preparations for departure. During the last week of July, she burned her papers and letters. Her family attended the Dismissal meeting of the CEZMS missionaries and met the other women with whom Charlotte was to serve. According to Giberne, most of her family remained convinced that her health would fail, that life would be too hard, and that she would be compelled to 'give in' and return to England. This was a severe underestimation of Charlotte's determination. Only Laura, who knew her sister so well understood intuitively that her beloved sister would never return: 'When my sister and I parted from one another, it was a parting for ever on Earth. My sister will not return to England ... she could not again go through the pain of separation'.¹⁵⁶ From that time on Charlotte was a most diligent and loving correspondent and kept the family fully informed of her work, travels and writing, but she maintained her separation and independence from them until her death.

Charlotte arrived in 'bright beautiful Bombay' in mid-November and travelled by rail, not directly to Amritsar but on a dog-leg journey which took her to Allahabad and then Futteypore. Inspired by Christian's journey in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, evidenced both in her emulative allegorical style and in her apparently fearless travels, Charlotte Tucker's journey became a pilgrimage. Amritsar became for her the 'Land of Beulah', the pilgrim's stopping place before the 'Celestial City'. At Futteypore she stopped to see where her beloved brother, Robert Tudor Tucker had been murdered. Here she searched for the two large stone columns inscribed with the Ten Commandments in Hindi and Urdu on one side, and English and Persian on the other that he had had erected on each side of the high road into Futteypore.¹⁵⁷ She then re-commenced her journey to Amritsar. It was a mammoth journey of eight hundred and forty-five miles, accomplished by rail in just over three days. On her arrival in Amritsar she was given a heroine's welcome by the resident missionaries. She announced immediately that she did not want to be addressed as 'Miss Tucker' but wanted instead to be called "Auntie". For a woman who had escaped her role of maiden aunt, her choice of name seems enigmatic.

Excited by the sights and impressions gained during her journey, Charlotte put pen to paper within days of her arrival to produce a short article entitled, 'Is The Work Real?' for inclusion in the 1875 *Indian Female Normal School Annual Report*. In this, A.L.O.E. confirmed for readers in England that the work was indeed 'real' and that the sterling efforts of the Church of England Missionaries were bringing real benefits to the

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 188.

¹⁵⁷ Hibbert, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

Empire and the 'natives'. The Society's missionaries had constructed a Native Christians' church and a number of natives had already been baptised: in local orphanages children were receiving lessons from missionary teachers, and two women, Misses Wauton and Hasell, were allowed to 'teach the Bible' in twenty-two schools.¹⁵⁸ As Miss Tucker remarked with an almost frightening zealotry, the Bible was 'a formidable weapon in the hands of those who are earnestly engaging in the warfare against Satan in this stronghold of idolatry, the religious capital of the Punjab'.¹⁵⁹ More zenānas had been opened to the visits of native Bible women and to European female missionaries. (In addition to the British, there were German and American missionaries in Amritsar). For Charlotte Tucker who had been raised on an eclectic mix of facts, exotic tales and horrific stories concerning the heathen populations of the sub-continent, arrival at her final destination must have been both a revelation and a confirmation.¹⁶⁰ Not only could she see the needs of the people, particularly her Indian 'sisters', she was also placed in a position to fulfil her plan to continue her brother's work as an Indian Evangelist.

During her eighteen years in India she continued to write books for the home market and produced at least forty small books for translation into Indian dialects. She put her skills to good use and was able to adapt well-recognised Indian features of landscape, animals, customs, and the people themselves into Christian moral tales and adaptations of the beatitudes. As Jacqueline Bratton has noted, 'her allegorical turn of mind was curiously appropriate to the story-telling traditions of her adopted land'.¹⁶¹ In addition, she wrote hymns, poetry, the Prologues for the Batala High School prize-giving,¹⁶² a number of short articles for missionary publications, the most prominent being the *Indian Female Evangelist*, *India's Women*, the *Church Missionary Gleaner* and the *Church Missionary Intelligencer*. Miss Tucker also composed an uncharacteristically clumsy piece of doggerel in 1876 touching upon what she saw as essential qualities for successful "Sahiba Misses":

¹⁵⁸ A.L.O.E. 'Is the Work Real?', *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society*, Year Ended Dec. 1875, Thos & Archibald Constable, Edinburgh, 1876, p. 51.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Henry St. George Tucker, CMT's father, had once been secretary to Sir William Jones, one of England's first serious Sanskrit scholars. B.B. Misra, *The Central Administration of the East India Company 1773-1834*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1959, p.p. 80-1. For a discussion of the cultural, material and intellectual impact of Orientalism in 19th century England, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Penguin, 1991 (first published RKP, London 1978), pp. 73-92.

¹⁶¹ Bratton, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

¹⁶² In addition to her own tales, Miss Tucker also read Shakespeare to 'educated Natives who were averse to the study of the Bible'. She thought Shakespeare to be 'very valuable in the formation of character', Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

Rules and Regulations

The Mission Miss Sahibas must never complain;
The Mission Miss Sahibas must temper restrain—
When “sust” pankah-wala won’t pull at the cane;*
Must never be fanciful, foolish, or vain.

The Mission Miss Sahiba in dress must be plain;
The Mission Miss Sahibas must furnish their brain, —
Of Two or three languages knowledge obtain,—
When weary and puzzled, must try, try again;
We cannot learn grammar by *leger de main*.

The Mission Sahiba must know every lane,
Climb ladder-like stairs, without fearing a sprain;
The Mission Miss Sahibas must speak very plain,
Must rebuke and encourage, must teach and explain;
The Mission Miss Sahibas must grasp well the rein;
The Mission Miss Sahibas must not look for gain,
Though doctoring sick folk, like Jenner or Quain.

Let Mission Miss Sahibas from late hours refrain,
For they must rise early, and bear a hard strain,
Like vigorous cart-horses, drawing a wain,
That pull well together, when yoked twain and twain.
The Mission Miss Sahibas must work might and main,
And therefore good nourishment should not disdain,—
Or danger is great of their going insane.

The Mission Miss Sahibas must topis retain,*
Must guard against sunstroke, to health such a bane;
And midst frogs and mosquitos must patient remain,
Yes, e’en when tormented, must smile through their pain;
And, with courage like that of the knights of Charlemagne,
By Miss Miss Sahibas snakes should be slain.

The Mission Miss Sahibas should sow well the grain,
Dark babies should fondle, dark women should train,
And Bibis and Begums at times entertain;
Should smile and should soothe, but not flatter or feign;
And to usefulness thus they may hope to attain.

N.B. Let all Miss Sahibas single remain, —
If they don’t, they step out of their proper domain,—
And can never be Mission Miss Sahibas again! ¹⁶³

Setting aside the dubious literary qualities which are immediately and uncomfortably obvious, the poet’s observations are notably revealing of her own attitudes. The reader may ask whether this whimsical poem was merely an idiosyncratic view of her own mission or an entirely practical and ‘hard-nosed’ prescription of stoicism combined with evangelicalism? Unquestionably, the CEMZS administrators in London

¹⁶³ A.L.O.E., ‘Rules and Regulations’, Giberne, *op. cit.*, pp. 316-7. [*] “Sust” is translated as ‘idle’, and a topi is a type of sun hat.

and 'the daughters of a ruling race'¹⁶⁴ as the Reverend T.A. Gurney had described Zenána missionaries in 1897, would have recognised some or all of the qualities Miss Tucker outlined.

In verse, Charlotte Tucker set out the qualifications needed for a perfect 'Mission-Miss Sahiba', identifying the personal qualities of courage, forbearance, good health and womanly modesty. These were given due prominence, but underpinning these worthy qualities, Miss Tucker identified 'single blessedness' as the primary qualification for a Zenána worker. As much as she admired married missionaries, and from Giberne's account there is no doubt that she relied heavily upon her married friends, especially Mrs. Margaret Elmslie, whom Miss Tucker called both her 'Queen Lily' and 'a gallant lady',¹⁶⁵ Charlotte Tucker believed that women (and men in other circumstances), performed their missionary duties best when single. Unmarried women could single-mindedly devote all their energies towards Zenána work.

Despite the 'rules and regulations', in India, Charlotte Tucker was able to tailor her activities to suit her own timetable. For the first time in her life she could work to her own rhythm — as an honorary missionary who had paid her own way and made no financial calls upon the Church of England for support, she was a free agent. She was able to travel more widely than she had ever been permitted in England or the Continent, and she could write and teach. Her letters convey a tangible sense of energy despite the passage of time. The tenor and vigour of the writer, then nearing the age of sixty, survives still. Missionary work had endowed her with a new lease on life and with her resources - religious, spiritual, literary, financial and social - she recreated herself in the British Empire.

After some months in Amtrisar, she left the city for the small town of Batala, a walled fortress of twenty-five thousand inhabitants, Sikhs, Mohammedans, Hindus and a scattering of Christian converts. With a view of the snow-capped Himalayas, Charlotte Tucker wrote breathlessly to her family:

I am considered to have a wonderful constitution. Take no fears about Batala. Fear is another thing with which Missionaries should have nothing to do. ... Those who might be timid girls in England fearlessly travel at night, quite alone - save for the company of wild-looking natives, through lonely mountain passes, perhaps through lightening and storm, with the possibility of meeting cheetahs, bears and snakes. I feel no more

¹⁶⁴ T.A. Gurney, October 1897, Preface, Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. v.

¹⁶⁵ Giberne, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-221.

afraid at Batala, with or without Mr. Beutel [the resident missionary at Amritsar], than you would of sleeping in a London Hotel¹⁶⁶

The juxtaposition in her letter of timid girls with wild-looking natives, and the images of lonely mountain passes with sedate London hotels provides some tantalising ideas. Had we not known that the passage was written by an ageing Christian missionary lady, we might think that they had been taken from a sensational travelogue written by an adventurer.¹⁶⁷ Whether these words reassured or alarmed her family remains unknown.

Despite her missionary duties, writing and teaching commitments, Charlotte Tucker did manage to travel within India, although she never went on extended periods of leave as did other missionary ladies. With her it became almost a point of honour not to be away from her post. In truth, her determination to prove her capabilities worried her companions and family greatly. White women were alleged to be unable to cope with the Indian climate but Miss Tucker, anxious to prove that age was no impediment, stuck out the heat, cold and rains like a veritable trooper. One supposes that she wanted to follow the examples of her brothers who had stuck to their posts through thick and thin in adversity, and she did not want to let the family name down. She travelled like a true pilgrim on itinerant expeditions with her companion, Mrs. Emslie and two native Bible-women. Miss Tucker travelled in a *duli* [a kind of palanquin - a covered litter for one carried by four or six men], and camped in a canvas tent. She felt courageous and exhilarated by her experiences and reported back to her sister that she and Mrs. Emslie had 'encamped in the midst of a Sikh village, ... living within a tent, without lock or key, with as little sensation of danger as I had at Woodlands or Firlands'. (Woodlands and Firlands were the homes of her brother and sister in sedate Berkshire). She donned white clothing, a topi and pugree, and a white parasol.¹⁶⁸ She had even intended to wear a sari but changed her mind to please Mrs. Elmslie who thought it not proper for a European.

She travelled to Lahore to Dalhousie, the administrative capital, which she described as 'grandly beautiful', and to Simla in the hills, in order to escape the summer heat. She wrote of her adventures to her sister:

¹⁶⁶ CMT to Laura Hamilton, October 15, 1877, *Ibid.*, p. 271.

¹⁶⁷ Jane Robinson makes the point in her chapter on women missionaries 'Quite Safe Up Here With Jesus', that 'the books written by them [missionaries] are amongst the most uplifting and exciting of all travel books ... there is a spirit of confidence and affectionate humour which, when allied with the missionary's other stock-in-trade, the ability to tell a good story, proves often quite irresistible', *op. cit.*, p. 153.

¹⁶⁸ A pugree was a length of very light material worn by Punjabi Indians, wound round and round to form a small turban to protect the head from the sun. A.L.O.E. wrote a short story entitled 'The Pugree with a Border of Gold' in a collection entitled *A Wreath of Indian Stories*, published by T. Nelson & Sons, London, in 1876. A.L.O.E. was then described as 'Honorary Missionary At Amritsar'.

One travels by night, without the slightest protection, surrounded by half-clad, ignorant semi-savages; one never dreams of fearing them. One takes one's early walk in a lonely place, where the cheetah or snake may lurk, without the smallest alarm. They would sure not attack one of the English! 169

She vividly described one such journey from Simla to Amritsar undertaken in 1889. Her various conveyances or 'vehicles', allowed her to accomplish the journey by foot, by *gari* and *duli*, by elephant and eventually by steam-train. For a sprightly sixty-eight year old, she took it all in her stride with a zest and philosophical good humour which might have deserted others in similar circumstances.

Vehicles, did I write? Would you call an elephant a vehicle? We came to a place ... the Gogra swollen by the rains. We were requested to quit the heavy gari, and go across on an elephant. The nice docile creature knelt down; and a man actually wished us to clamber up by its tail! He grasped it, so as to form a kind of loop for me to put my foot in! ... I managed to scramble up by means of a kind of big bag hung across the animal. There was no saddle or howdah; but the beast's back was broad, its pace gentle, and we held on by ropes fastened across the elephant. 170

Unfortunately, Charlotte Maria Tucker never wrote her own biographical traveller's tales and reserved her pen exclusively for reports, articles, tracts and stories for native readers. Her letters to her family were written in an easy conversational style and were full of observations on the passing throng. Her correspondence was peppered with Hindi and Urdu words translated for Giberne's readers, but presumably these were well-recognised within Charlotte Tucker's own family who had been raised by a bi-lingual father. Undoubtedly, travel inspired a new sense of purpose in her writings, and writing for native readers provided a new motive for her travels.

Daughters of Empire

The Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society,¹⁷¹ subsequently Church of England Zenána Mission, was originally intended to bring the gospel to Indian women and girls and to hasten conversions to Christianity—its object was to 'widen the knowledge of the Gospel among the women of India in accordance with Protestant Evangelical teachings of the Church of England'.¹⁷² The original mission gradually

169 Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

170 CMT to Laura Hamilton, July 18, 1889, *ibid.*, pp. 450-1.

171 Established in 1852. The earliest mission of English women appears to have been a Ladies Society for Native Female Education in the East established in Calcutta by a Miss Cooke in 1821. Barnes, *Behind the Pardah*, p. 9.

172 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

expanded: from the first schools which the women missionaries established for girls, (and later the daughters of native Christians), came orphanages, Zenana Visitation societies, Hindu and Muhummadan [sic] Female Schools, native Bible women, medical missions and dispensaries.¹⁷³ Women's work in this expanded mission which included Charlotte Maria Tucker's eighteen years of unbroken service, brought new ideas and a number of fundamental changes to the lives of those who used the mission's services, particularly amongst the women and girls who converted to Christianity.

British women, reformers and religionists informed about Indian life, were often saddened and horrified at the practices, attitudes and customs which they thought denigrated and undervalued the worth of all Indian females; Charlotte Tucker was not immune from such views. Although she tried to respect the spirituality of other religions, she believed that in practice Hinduism was depraved and idolatrous, and Muhammadism ~~was~~ fraudulent and oppressive. She considered that she had been called by God to perform her work in India, which distinguished her from secular reformers like Annette Ackroyd, who had been inspired by the 1870 London lectures of Keshub Chunder Sen, the leader of the Brahmo Somaj.¹⁷⁴

Annette Ackroyd, a near contemporary of Charlotte's, arrived in Calcutta in 1872 to set up a school for Indian women and they exhibited some suprising resemblances, though Ackroyd came from a Nonconformist (Unitarian), liberal background and 'disdained all connections with Christianizing institutions'. She, like Charlotte Tucker, wanted to remove caste, religious and class distinctions between women; she wanted to bring education and medical assistance and, above all, she wanted women to be valued in their own society.¹⁷⁵ Charlotte Tucker shared these goals and knew of Keshub Sen's views which were remarkably supportive of missionary activity in India. She was also aware of the mocking opinions of those who disagreed with missionary activity. Charlotte referred to Sen's outspoken views in a letter to her niece, Leila Hamilton:

I am sure that you and your dear mother [Laura] would peruse with interest Keshab Sen's lecture, or rather the review of it in the *Statesman* which I sent home . . . Keshab Sen was a brave man, not only as regards the

¹⁷³ Zenana comes from a Persian word: 'zan' means woman. Zenána means 'women's court' or women's quarters. Men were never admitted to the zenana.

¹⁷⁴ Annette Ackroyd (1842-1929) is discussed in detail by Vron Ware in *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*, Verso, London, 1992, pp. 121-166. Her civilizing mission failed in that her school closed in 1875, the year Charlotte Tucker arrived in India. Annette Ackroyd wrote extensively on the rights of Indian women under British rule. Brahmo Somaj was an association for Indian social and political reform. Keshub Sen 'outlined the need for basic education for Indian people, especially what he perceived to be the neglected area of women's education, and he appealed directly to English women to go out to teach their 'Indian sisters'. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121, p. 159.

Hindus, but the English officials, to say what he did. To aver that it is Christ's Religion—not our superior strength, wisdom, intelligence—that holds India for us, is likely to give great offence in high quarters. To say what this Hindu did of despised Missionaries, a band of weak-minded amiable enthusiasts, if not something more contemptible,—as the world thinks them,—showed moral courage. ... He has probably made a good many people, both white and brown, angry. His cry, "Jesus alone!—Jesus alone! India for Christ!" would find no echo in the large majority of hearts.¹⁷⁶

Thus, Annette Ackroyd and Charlotte Tucker, poles apart in so many respects, similarly linked Sen's moral views with the aims of Victorian female activists or feminists whose sympathies lay exclusively with Indian women.¹⁷⁷

Charlotte Tucker became a "feminist" accidentally through her work on behalf of the Zenána movement in women's education and dispensary work. More than once she encountered hostility from men who resented Christian women like herself putting 'revolutionary' ideas into women's heads: 'The Muhammadans more bitter than before. Twice this week I—an aged servant of Christ—have been turned away from the Zenanas ... Today I was rejected at a fourth'.¹⁷⁸ More often than not, however, Charlotte was received with respect and courtesy on account of her age, especially when she demonstrated a knowledge of India's holy books: 'A very nice visit. Two fine young men, and at least seven women of various ages, appeared pleased, interested, and without any bigotry. So much inclined towards Christianity did one man in particular seem, that I spoke of the advantage of a united family accepting the Truth.'¹⁷⁹ There is no evidence that Charlotte Tucker ever espoused an overtly political view; if she had, she would have probably echoed her father's support for British mercantilism and the Tory Party.¹⁸⁰ Throughout her life, she never consciously undermined his ideals and wholeheartedly supported Queen Victoria—'the dear Queen'—and the British civilizing mission. But she recognised that change in England was affecting women. In an article written anonymously for the *Quiver*, (presumably to quarantine personal views from those of the CEZMS), she thundered:

The life of women in England is perhaps yearly becoming freer, fuller of resources, more capable of development. Their education is being enlarged, spheres of work are increasing for them, and it is surely a

¹⁷⁶ CMT to Leila Hamilton, May 1, 1879, Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

¹⁷⁷ Like Barbara Caine, I use the word 'feminist' with caution. As Caine notes, the phrase 'feminism' was not in common usage until the the first world war. Caine, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁷⁸ Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 462.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 463.

¹⁸⁰ Only one reference is made to the Tuckers's political allegiances. At a dinner party held in 1846, both Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell were roundly criticised at the table. Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

woman's own fault now-a-days, in this country, if she passes her time in idleness, or dies of *ennui*.

But how is the case of the women of India?—not only her sister in a common humanity, but her fellow subjects? Alas! the life of numbers of Indian women from the cradle to the grave is one of emptiness and weariness, and to many it is filled with sorrow and woe. There are a hundred millions of women in India; their condition and manner of life should surely have great interest for us.¹⁸¹

Historians continue to argue about the complicit role of colonizing women; middle and upper-class women like Charlotte Tucker who went to India to 'do good' have been criticised variously for their 'maternalism', imperialist notions, desire to control and insensitive interference with native customs and religion.¹⁸² As Margaret Jolly has recently observed, English *memsahibs* have been seen as perpetrators and victims of colonial ideologies, as 'the source of snobbishness and racism and ... ultimately blamed for the loss of Empire'.¹⁸³ There is little doubt that the issues are complex and contradictory. In Charlotte Tucker's belief, her work was guided by Christian faith and a desire to remove the base elements of racism from the minds of her European counterparts and 'native' society'. She had little time for those, including government officials, European merchants and Commissioner's wives, who expressed racist views. As she wrote: 'One is pretty certain that one will meet some folk who are inclined to think Natives, "niggers", Converts hypocrites, and Missionaries half-rogues and half-fools'.¹⁸⁴

In her attempts to 'orientalise' her mind, Charlotte struggled to improve her Indian language skills so that she could communicate with the people and share idioms which would have context and meaning. According to Rev. Robert Clark's ¹⁸⁵ recollections of A.L.O.E.'s arrival in Amritsar, she was welcomed not only as a famous writer, but also as a 'spiritual' and 'intellectual power', and one who sympathised with the local

¹⁸¹ The *Quiver*, Vol. XVII, 1882, Cassell & Co., London, pp. 592-596.

¹⁸² See, for example, the writings of Vron Ware, in *Beyond the Pale*, op. cit., Margaret Jolly, 'Colonizing Women: The maternal body and empire', in S. Gunen and A. Yeatman, *Feminism and the Politics of Difference*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1993, pp. 103-127, Jeffrey Cox, 'Independent English Women in Dehli and Lahore, 1860-1947', in R.W. Davis & R. J. Helmstadter (eds.), *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian Society: Essays in Honor of R.K. Webb*, Routledge, London & New York, 1992, pp. 166-184, Edward Said, *Orientalism*, op. cit., and Antoinette Burton, 'The white women's burden; British feminists and the Indian woman, 1865-1915', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13, 4, (1990), pp. 295-308. This list is not exhaustive as feminist and post-colonial studies of imperialism continue to grow.

¹⁸³ Margaret Jolly has suggested in her chapter cited above, that the work of many colonial women, including missionaries, has been obscured by 'orthodox, colonialist, masculinist histories'. Jolly, 'Colonizing Women', op. cit., pp. 103-5.

¹⁸⁴ CMT, letter Aug. 22, 1877. Giberne, op. cit., p. 268.

¹⁸⁵ Reverend Robert Clarke was the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society's, Punjab Corresponding Committee. *History of the CMS. The Environment, Its Men and Its Work*, CMS, London, 1899, Eugene Stock, (ed.), Vol. III, p. 152.

population. She 'sought intercourse with the people and tried to think their thoughts and feel with their feelings, and to realise their position and circumstances'.¹⁸⁶ She wrote to her sister of her affection for the local people. Of course, there were always some who feared that she might sympathise too much. Referring to others' fears for her loneliness, she wrote:

I know that some of my dear friends think that I must be very lonesome with no white woman near me . . . Real loneliness, as regards even this world, is the want of love and sympathy. Some count my brown friends for nothing in this way. I do not do so. They draw out one's affections, and respond to them. The heart does not shrivel up in in India, even when one lives in such an out-of-the-way place as Batala.¹⁸⁷

Missionary women were isolated on a number of fronts, not only from their families. They are still seen by some as distinctly apart from British feminists, yet separate religious and secular motives seemed to draw both groups closer in efforts to improve the lives of Indian women. In important respects, both groups were also improving their own lives as independent English women, particularly in the professions of medicine and teaching, and in disseminating religion directly to other women in a Zenána ministry. It could be argued that both missionaries and feminists often saw themselves as exemplars, freed from the interference of men in their specialised fields. Tucker and Ackroyd saw education 'as a tool in helping [Indian] women achieve more power in their own society', and both viewed the behaviour and religious practice of Indian men as perpetuating women's low status. Both worked from different ends of their 'civilising mission' to 'save' Indian womanhood.¹⁸⁸

In a recent study of independent English women in Lahore, Jeffrey Cox has suggested that 'women missionaries promoted their own ideal of a special bond of sympathy between English women and Indian women, a bond that would eventually lead India to Christ or, if not to Christ, to Western standards of hygiene'.¹⁸⁹ Feminists in India sought the same ends. While Charlotte Tucker brought both dispensary medicines and Christian salvation to Indian women, she was also highly responsive to certain Indian ideas. On her arrival in Batala, for instance, she attempted to inaugurate a 'sort of 'Zenana' of maiden Missionary ladies,—a close retreat, from which the foot of Man should be utterly and always excluded'. Such an extreme exchange of cultural ideas was interpreted by friends 'as part of [Charlotte's] desire to imitate the ways of Natives',¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

¹⁸⁷ CMT to Laura Hamilton, Batala, April 20, 1879, *ibid.*, p. 323.

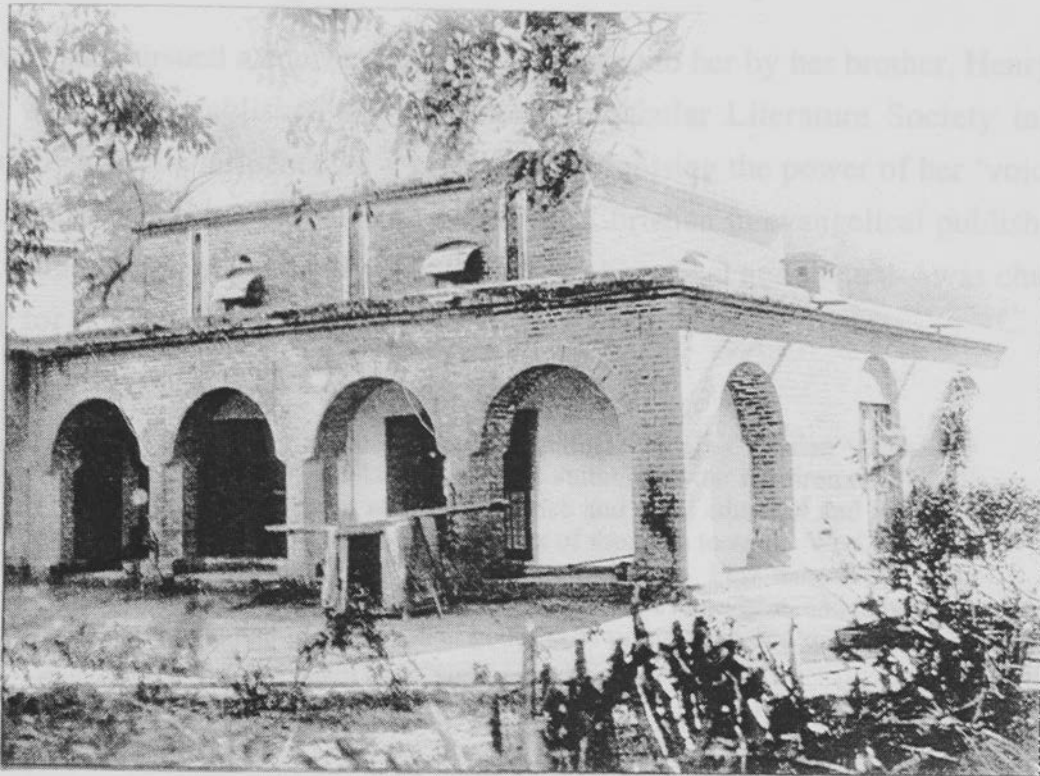
¹⁸⁸ Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 161.

¹⁸⁹ Cox, 'Independent English Women in India', Davis & Helmstadter, *Religion and Irreligion*, p. 170.

¹⁹⁰ Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

and her conservative female missionary sisters dissuaded her from any such establishment. While Charlotte Tucker would not have recognised the term 'feminist', she would have agreed that her work was woman-centred, and Indian woman-centred at that.

In the house which she purchased in Batala and named after the Hindu word for sunset, 'Gurub i Aftab', Charlotte lived without company, arranged her travels, produced her writings for Thomas Nelson, and illustrated biblical texts. From here she set out to visit 'scores upon scores' of Zenanas where she was received with a mixture of respect, curiosity and courtesy. The house provided her with more than an opportunity to live without fetters and trappings; it was also a symbol of her independence.



'SUNSET,' A. L. O. E.'S THREE-ROOMED HOUSE

Plate 24: 'Gurub-i-Aftab' - 'Sunset', A.L.O.E's Batala home.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Plate taken from Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 461.

For Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Tucker, having a home of one's own was of great importance.¹⁹² Charlotte Tucker's Indian base actually enhanced her ability to write for an English public. Her publishers, Nelson's, kept her fully informed on sales and promotions and A.L.O.E. continued to be a steady seller on the English-speaking market as advertisements in the Publishers' Circular attest. A.L.O.E. was a good export—her reputation in England was secure and increased her reputation since her 'sacrifice' was regarded as further proof of her sincerity.

In India, A.L.O.E produced a range of texts and tales for translation into vernacular languages, and her older works went into "cheap editions". As she wrote to Nelson & Son in 1890:

The subject of "cheap editions" of works published long ago is of great interest to me. I am living in an immense country, swarming with Muhammadans, Hindus, and Infidels, where Government is educating tens of thousands without giving them any religious instruction . . . an evident breakwater for the waves of impiety and sedition is religious literature.¹⁹³

Moreover, she pursued a course originally suggested to her by her brother, Henry Carre Tucker who had established the Christian Vernacular Literature Society in India. Knowing A.L.O.E's influence as a writer and recognising the power of her 'voice' as a representative of all that was ethical, moral and Christian in evangelical publishing, he had encouraged her, believing that her writing—allegorical and factual—was character-building for English and Indian souls:

The great thing at present is to disseminate widely Christian Vernacular Literature in all the languages, and suitable to the requirements of all classes, men, women and children; rich and poor; educated and ignorant. Government is rapidly teaching most of the boys to read. We Christians must provide them with a wholesome literature. Few women and girls can be reached personally, but books penetrate everywhere, and may do an untold amount of secret silent good. The preparation and distribution of such Literature ought to be your great object.¹⁹⁴

Charlotte took Henry Care Tucker's words to heart and, as she had promised her sister Laura in 1875, she gained an intimate knowledge of many more than *one* Zenana in India. Charlotte knew her pen was powerful and in the following chapters the ways that "A Lady of England's" message became audible in England and in India will be addressed.

¹⁹² Virginia Woolf wrote much later in 1929, about the necessity for women writers to have a space in which to write (and an income). See her essay, *A Room of One's Own*.

¹⁹³ CMT to Thos. Nelson & Sons, Jan. 18, 1890, *ibid.*, p. 454.

¹⁹⁴ Henry Carre Tucker to CMT, *ibid.*, p. 455. (No date given).

The Literary Movement - 1840s - 1850s

Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Charlotte Brontë

Edgar Allan Poe, a journalist, is a master of suspense, whose stories are full of mystery and horror. He is a pioneer of the detective story, and his stories are full of mystery and horror. He is a master of suspense, whose stories are full of mystery and horror. He is a pioneer of the detective story, and his stories are full of mystery and horror.

Public Worlds

Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Charlotte Brontë were all writers who lived in the 19th century. They were all writers who lived in the 19th century. They were all writers who lived in the 19th century. They were all writers who lived in the 19th century.

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1. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Hound of Hells," in *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-10.
2. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," in *The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-10.
3. Charlotte Brontë, "Jane Eyre," in *The Complete Works of Charlotte Brontë*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-10.

Chapter V

The Literary Successes - 1840s - 1860s

Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker

Literature has become a profession. It is a means of subsistence, almost as certain as the bar or the church ... By a calculation made some years ago, the authors of England amounted to many thousands. These, of course, included barristers with scarce briefs, physicians with few patients, clergymen on small livings, *idle women*, rich men and a large crop of aspiring noodles.¹

When Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker ventured initially into the public world of authorship in the mid-nineteenth-century, they displayed, among other essential feminine virtues, a perfect sense of timing. These were times when didactic fiction for the young still flourished and the genre of semi-religious fiction for adults had not yet saturated the market.

Felicia Skene began writing for publication in 1843, Charlotte Maria Tucker in 1852, and Hesba Stretton in 1859. By the mid-1860s, they were 'old hands', fortunate to have entered the literary market place as literary apprentices during a vital and expanding phase in British publishing. The writers joined what has been aptly described as 'the first "journalizing" society',² and this coincided with the years when a generation of thoughtful mid-Victorians had already begun to manifest symptoms described by historians and sociologists, as the "Victorian social conscience".

Throughout the 1850s and 1860s, as more and more women "with a purpose" joined the literary and philanthropic ranks of England, there was also a conspicuous increase in specific criticism of women writers and philanthropists. This was partly a response to the perceived invasion by women into male literary territory and a critical reaction to the alleged armies of women involved in philanthropic activities. The maligned "do-gooders"—whom even Felicia Skene referred to as well-meaning 'blunderers'³—

¹ Anonymous, [G.H. Lewes], 'The Condition of Authors in England, Germany and France', *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. 35, March 1847, p. 285. [My emphasis added].

² Joanne Shattock & Michael Wolff, Introduction, *The Victorian Press: Samplings and Soundings*, Edited by Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff, Leicester University Press & University of Toronto Press, 1982, p. xiv.

³ Felicia Skene wrote a short signed article as F.M.F. Skene on the subject of uninformed philanthropy entitled, 'The Blunderer; or, How the Work of the Rich Among the Poor is Marred', for *Good Words*. Miss Skene chastised those 'blunderers' who assumed moral and spiritual superiority over the poor, who pried into the secrets of others' souls, and ignored the need to succour bodily requirements before attending to the spiritual. *Good Words*, April 11, 1867, pp. 256-260.

came in for criticism, but the louder complaint concerned “idle women” attracted to semi-religious writing, and included women such as Skene, Stretton and Tucker.

The intellectual climate of the mid-nineteenth century could best be described as bracing. The “Condition of England” debate was still raging amongst reformers and politicians, and the chorus had been joined by the literate and articulate middle and respectable working classes. It was, as the middle-class thunderer Thomas Carlyle had already observed, a time of ‘frenzies and panics’. Carlyle had argued pessimistically in his famous essay ‘Signs of the Times’, that in these divisive times, the moral, religious and spiritual condition of the people seemed to be of less concern than the material.⁴ It was the recognition of this absence of interest in the human soul which provided many women with their literary mission and, when published, a distinctive voice.

In company with the challenging discussions produced by Carlyle, Mill, Arnold and others, came a host of moral and religious essays produced by eminent clerics and moralists.⁵ These debates, too, were strenuous and their argument and production occupied the minds and pens of sermonisers and theologians. Closely-argued doctrinal and moral essays in periodicals, newspapers, and journals commanded a central place in print. Contemporaries and later historians have acknowledged that these debates contributed to a vital public discourse and that the range of social issues canvassed greatly affected the conscience and mind-set of the literate public.⁶

No subject was taboo except, perhaps, the subject of human sexuality. In journalism this topic was present though usually veiled in delicate euphemisms or

⁴ Thomas Carlyle, ‘Signs of the Times’, *Edinburgh Review*, 1829.

⁵ Reverend John Hunt, D.D., produced a compendium of the most important religious essays and debates in *Religious Thought in England in the Nineteenth Century*, Gibbings & Co., London, 1896. It runs to over 300 pages.

⁶ There are now many valuable sources available which provide scholars with detailed information on the content of Victorian periodicals which attempt to assess the influence of this type of publishing. An exhaustive list is not provided but for a detailed discussion on the impact of periodical publishing in the Victorian era, see L. Blake, A. Jones, L. Madden, (eds.), *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, Macmillan, Hants. 1990, *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, edited by Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff, Leicester University Press, 1982. W.E. Houghton’s study, *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870*, published by Yale University Press in 1957 is a thorough and reflective study on the pre-occupations of literate Victorians. Gertrude Himmelfarb discusses the impact of religious debate briefly in *Victorian Minds*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1968. An indication of the variety of religious magazines available to the reading public is found in *British Literary Magazines - The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913*, Alvin Sullivan (ed.). Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1984, *Victorian Periodicals: A Guide to Research*, edited by J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. Van Arsdell, The Modern Language Association of America, 1978, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain*, Alvar Ellegård, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain*, Göteborgs Universitets Årsskrift, Vol. LXIII, Göteborg, 1957, and L.E. Elliot-Binns, *Religion in the Victorian Era*, Lutterworth Press, U.K. 1948.

incorporated into discussions concerning medicine, marriage, Contagious Diseases and the social evil of prostitution.⁷ In fiction, the subject was treated differently. Sexuality, albeit muted or repressed, was addressed not only in sensation and silver-fork novels but also more subtly, in semi-religious fiction.⁸ Five major arenas of controversy occupied the printed space: education, social welfare and industrialisation, religion, science and art.⁹ In the arena of social welfare, the topics of poverty, philanthropy and social reform featured, whereas in the arena of religion, the issues of morality, belief and the human condition received greatest attention. Like many others in the community, especially those relatively influential and leisured, Skene, Stretton, and Tucker responded not only to what they read, but also to what they observed around them. They saw evidence of distress.

Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton, and Charlotte Maria Tucker were amongst those earnest individuals who were vitally interested in the moral, religious and spiritual condition of the people — the intangible ‘Soul-politic’ which Carlyle had argued earlier had been neglected in favour of the ‘Body-politic’.¹⁰ These women understood the importance of both. Never immune from contemporary debates and religious concerns, they were swept up by what contemporaries called ‘the call to seriousness’.¹¹

Their particular call was manifest early in active religion and practical philanthropy and was given greater expression in writing. In this way, Skene, Stretton and Tucker linked their literary creativity with a religious impetus. As writers, they ultimately chose fiction and used it as a specialised conduit to reach the wider world, often with great effect. In a literate society with growing numbers of readers, semi-religious fiction was the perfect medium for evangelising and educative purposes. Fiction suited the writers’ religious sensibilities and more practical philanthropic aims; it was flexible and robust

⁷ See, F. Barry Smith’s short essay, ‘Sexuality in Britain, 1800-1900: Some Suggested Revisions’ in *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, edited by Martha Vicinus, Methuen & Co., London, 1980, pp. 182-198. Smith argues that such ‘genteel reticence’ began long before the Victorians allegedly ‘invented’ it. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁸ Felicia Skene, as we know, addressed the problem of prostitution in fiction and non-fictional forms. Hesba Stretton also skillfully incorporated characters such as young “Kitty” (*Little Meg’s Children*, 1867), who, by her description was easily recognised by adult readers as a prostitute. Hesba Stretton was criticised in a review in the *Athenaeum* (13 Dec. 1873), for referring to ‘rescue missions’ and the ‘social evil’ in her tale, *The King’s Servants*.

⁹ *The Victorian Mind: An Anthology*, edited and selected by Gerald B. Kauvar and Gerald C. Sorensen, (Preface by Jane Fawcett), Cassell, London, in association with the Victorian Society, London, 1969.

¹⁰ Carlyle’s ‘Soul-politic’ represented the moral, religious and spiritual condition of the people while the “Body-politic” which Carlyle maintained was ‘more than ever worshipped and tendered’, represented the physical, practical and economic condition on the people. Carlyle, ‘Signs of the Times’, *loc. cit.*,

¹¹ The expression ‘the call to seriousness’ is lifted from G.W.E. Russell’s biography of *Lady Victoria Buxton*, (1919), p. 73, cited in Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1976, p. 18.

enough to carry a realistic plot and simultaneously to convey a strong religious message. Using a powerful narrative, each writer could graphically expose society's problems and project their solutions. As Christians imbued with a strong sense of social duty, like so many Victorians, these women believed that human suffering was a combination of physical and material deprivation but also a deep spiritual hunger. Their aim was to satisfy this hunger.

"Ideals of Feminine Usefulness"

Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton, and Charlotte Maria Tucker, each writer influenced by an evangelical ethos, shared a sense of purpose which was referred to by contemporaries in terms of a desire for "usefulness". A nineteenth-century journalist, Edith Simcox, familiar with philanthropic women such as Skene, Stretton, and Tucker, wrote a perceptive article on the "Ideals of Feminine Usefulness" for the *Fortnightly Review*.¹² She distinguished between women who 'merely desired the distraction of sustained [philanthropic] employment', women of 'some religion ... who had a moral aversion from [sic] a useless life', and those philanthropic "Good Samaritans" for whom "usefulness" in every sphere was regarded as both a womanly and as an almost consecrated, religious duty.¹³ Despite formal and informal constraints which restricted other freedoms, large numbers of mid-Victorian women were positively encouraged to perform acts of philanthropy since such work was regarded as 'womanly' and thus extensions of domestic character.¹⁴

For many, usefulness incorporated ideals which sprang from a religious impetus. These ideals included notions of Christian stewardship, moral guardianship, civic duty and practical deeds known popularly as "good works". Middle and upper-class women particularly, felt drawn towards these Christian notions as well as scriptural models of womanly virtue.¹⁵ For Skene, Stretton, and Tucker, practical usefulness implied not self-abnegating service but a positive action which enhanced a sense of personal

¹² Edith J. Simcox, (1844-1901), was a contributor to the *Academy* for 25 years, *The Nineteenth Century*, and the *Manchester Guardian*. She ran a co-operative shirt manufactory on socialist principles in Soho with a friend, Mary Hamilton and fought for compulsory, secular education for all children. She was also George Eliot's passionate admirer and the author of 'Ideals of Feminine Usefulness', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. XXVII (New Series), Jan-June, 1880, pp. 657-671.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 667.

¹⁴ Brian Heeney, *The Women's Movement in the Church of England, 1850-1930*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1988, p. 13.

¹⁵ Dorcas Societies (ladies sewing circles for making clothing for charitable purposes), were inspired by Dorcas, *Acts*, ix, 39. It will be recalled that Hesba Stretton did not enjoy the gossip which took place at Dorcas meetings.

autonomy. In addition to fulfilling charitable functions, it allowed these women to participate actively, if modestly, in the public domain.¹⁶

“Good Samaritans”, using Edith Simcox’s term, usually practised the pursuit of ‘domesticated’ philanthropic activities such as home visiting of the poor, ministering to the sick and the dying, sewing baby clothes, dispensing blankets and coal, teaching in Sunday Schools and Ragged schools, fund-raising at fetes and bazaars and, of course, distributing and occasionally, writing religious tracts. These activities were usually conducted within the confines of local communities with the necessary and tacit approval of family, church and society.¹⁷ Importantly, usefulness also extended into the realms of writing and publishing.

Both large and small publishing houses such as Cassells, S.W. Partridge, Thomas Nelson, and Chambers, invested great energies in producing pages of inexpensive but high quality “cheap literature”, in easily accessible, illustrated, fact-filled journals and magazines for distribution to the mass reading public — “no ordinary trash about Italian castles, and daggers, and ghosts in the blue chamber, and similar nonsense, but something really good”.¹⁸ Religious and secular societies including the Religious Tract Society (RTS) and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), disseminated “useful” information which was, to an extent, philanthropic publishing.¹⁹ Profits were ploughed back to subsidise production costs and pay writers like Skene, Stretton and Tucker for their enlightening moral tales, novels, occasional articles and serial fiction. Writing semi-religious fiction with specific aims and philanthropic purposes thus fell well within the boundaries of acceptable women’s philanthropy.

The process of writing, like philanthropy itself, was often “domesticated”. Most women writers wrote from home, usually after their “chores” were completed; some played up this point emphasising the precedence of their domestic and religious duties over writing. Charlotte Maria Tucker, in the preface to her epistolary tale, *Pictures of St. Paul: Drawn in an English Home*, (actually written in Batala), stressed that writing always took second place to her domestic and missionary work. A.L.O.E reminded her

¹⁶ For a detailed discussion on the public domain, see, ‘Introduction’, Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*, particularly, pp. 14-17.

¹⁷ For further discussion, see Anne Summers ‘A Home from Home’ - Women’s Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century, *Fit Work for Women*, in Sandra Burman (ed.), St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1973, pp. 33-63.

¹⁸ William Chambers, An Address to His Readers, *Chambers Edinburgh Journal*, (1832), cited by Lowell T. Frye in ‘W. & R. Chambers’, *British Literary Publishing Houses 1820-1880*, Patricia J. Anderson and Jonathan Rose (eds.), Vol. 106, Gale Research Inc., Detroit, p. 85.

¹⁹ Further discussion on the links between philanthropy and publishing follows in **Chapter VI**, ‘Good Works and Good Books’.

readers that she had 'jealously sought to guard her own missionary work from being encroached on by the pen; composition had to take but a secondary place in the duties of the day'.²⁰ Successful English writers such as Mrs. Gaskell, Mrs. Henry Wood, Mrs. Oliphant and others,²¹ and their American literary sisters,²² made a constant virtue out of fulfilling domestic duties before attending to writing. Participation in the glories and rewards of domesticity was publicly flourished as proof of a writer's devotion to writing, not as a barrier to its final production.²³

Semi-religious fiction written by women characteristically embraced themes and plots which, in addition to a central religious message, emphasised positive, feminine, and domestic images. Kindly, country-bred widows purveyed generosity, love, warm beds and reviving hot food to waifs and strays of all ages. Such writers superimposed a consoling ideal on examples of practical measures needed to alleviate individual human suffering. Yet they also worked simultaneously to expose many of the causes of misery associated with the negative side of domesticity. Skene and Stretton, and to a lesser extent, Tucker, advanced discomfiting and conscience-pricking visions of premature and unnecessary death, the blight of religious ignorance, freezing attics, nagging hunger, fear, child abuse and parental neglect, drunkenness, deliberate cruelty and sexual exploitation. The exposure of these hidden or ignored forms of human suffering was, of course, one of the major purposes of this genre.

Skene, Stretton, and Tucker's philanthropic specialisations are discussed in more detail later; here they are to be seen differentiated from other women engaged in philanthropic activities through their success as writers. Women capable of integrating philanthropic work with thriving writing careers were rare. Apart from displaying the so-

²⁰ Preface, *Pictures of St. Paul: Drawn in an English Home*, by A.L.O.E, Gall & Inglis, London & Edinburgh, [n.d.], c. 1885.

²¹ See two recent studies, Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, Faber & Faber, London, 1993, and Elisabeth Jay, *Mrs Oliphant: 'A Fiction to Herself'*, Oxford University Press, 1995. Mrs Humphry Ward, on the other hand, made a virtue out of being seen as intellectual and therefore, *not* domesticated. See, John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian Pre-Eminent Edwardian*, Oxford University Press, 1990.

²² Mary Kelley, in her sensitive analysis of nineteenth-century American women writers, uses the term 'literary domestics' to describe twelve writers, Maria Cummins, Caroline Howard Gilman, Caroline Lee Hentz, Mary Jane Holmes, Maria McIntosh, Sara Parton, Catharine Maria Sedwick, E.D.E.N. Southworth, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mary Virginia Terhune, Susan Warner and Augusta Evans Wilson. See, Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1984.

²³ Privately, however, in memoirs and letters, many writers presented a less comforting picture admitting often that the constraints and demands of writing and domesticity had exhausted them, seemingly to the point of collapse. Nigel Cross has provided many poignant examples of this form of writer's cramp, or more accurately, writer's fatigue, in a discussion of women writers' applications to the Royal Literary Fund. See, 'The Female Drudge', Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 164-203.

called ‘domestic sympathies’—if not actually performing domestic tasks on their own home fronts,²⁴ they had to demonstrate emphatic literary talents in order to sell books to fund philanthropic projects. Skene, Stretton and Tucker were amongst the few who managed to combine literary and philanthropic energies to produce “best-sellers” and enjoy literary success.²⁵ Success, of course, was measured in a number of ways, not necessarily in sales figures alone. Having one’s fictional topic as well as one’s gender criticised publicly, proved to be highly profitable in unexpected ways.

Ironically, the combined forces of familial, religious and social authority which endorsed the ideal of women’s philanthropic careers in public, often worked in private to prevent women’s involvement in charitable works or religious debate. As we have seen, Charlotte Maria Tucker’s determined heroine “Claudia Hartswood” who wanted desperately to teach ‘homeless, hungry and ragged scholars’ at the ‘Need Lane School’, was refused permission to do so by her lawyer father. She was told that she could not work in the ‘ragged school’ until she had achieved the ‘first silver thread in her hair’.²⁶ Charlotte Maria Tucker had been similarly restricted by her own father. “Claudia Hartswood”, eventually succeeded and, according to A.L.O.E, ‘in after-life, Claudia became an acknowledged leader amongst those of her own sex engaged in philanthropic labours, by her pen, her voice, her influence enlightening and comforting thousands’.²⁷ Hopeful words from an impassioned author.

Despite any lingering parental opposition or personal reluctance to abandon the role of dutiful daughter, the women in this study had found by the early 1850s, a new and respectable way of entering the public sphere through the publisher’s door. Access was gained by the act of writing semi-religious fiction though not without struggle. Many mid-Victorian women writers experienced considerable difficulties in finding their own place in the literary world. Obvious talent and family connections helped, but conservative publishers consistently resisted the perceived intrusion of unschooled women. Prejudice took many subtle forms, including strong resistance from men of letters. More surprising, perhaps, was the often harsh criticism emanating from women within the publishing and writing professions.

²⁴ Skene, Stretton, and Tucker all had domestic servants.

²⁵ Charlotte M. Yonge, (1823-1901), the High Church novelist, used her literary profits to fund specific charities. The profit from one of her best-sellers, *The Heir of Redclyffe*, was donated to Bishop Selwyn and was used to pay for a missionary schooner for the Anglican Melanesian mission. Sutherland, *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction*, p. 686.

²⁶ *Claudia: A Tale*, p. 288.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

At the time, few women were employed as professional reviewers for literary periodicals, but together they wielded considerable power. Three in particular, Geraldine Jewsbury of the *Athenaeum*, George Eliot of the *Westminster Review*, and Eliza Lynn Linton of the *Saturday Review*, acted as literary gatekeepers and yielded little to any aspiring literary sisters.²⁸ Miss Jewsbury made some characteristically pointed remarks about women writers in 1866 when she reviewed the new works of Florence Marryat and Felicia Skene. Her column 'New Novels', criticised both in devastating fashion. Beginning with a cutting remark about Marryat's novel, ironically entitled *Woman Against Woman*, Jewsbury observed:

It is curious that the most questionable novels of the day should be written by women. To judge from their books, the ideas of women on points of morals and ethics seem in a state of transition, and consequently, of confusion.²⁹

In the adjacent column, Jewsbury criticised *Hidden Depths*, Felicia Skene's semi-religious and allegedly shocking novel.³⁰ The author was accused not of 'confusion' but of displaying 'an air of spiritual superiority' which provoked the critic's severest condemnation. The novel was damned as 'weak' and the facts it contained were described as 'painful'.³¹

A review such as this might not have influenced independent-minded readers, but it undoubtedly influenced Charles Mudie, proprietor of England's largest circulating library who believed that in writing, 'vice, graphically depicted, would pollute rather than deter the young'.³² He took Miss Jewsbury's review seriously and subsequently refused to stock *Hidden Depths* because of its controversial topic. The only woman in publishing to support Skene's novel was Emily Faithfull. An activist for reform and editor of the *Victoria Magazine*, Faithfull responded positively to Skene's critique of sexual double standards considering *Hidden Depths* to be the only novel worthy of readers' consideration in May 1866.³³

²⁸ Mrs Oliphant reviewed novels widely for journals such as *Contemporary Review*, *Cornhill Magazine*, *Edinburgh Review*, *Blackwood's Magazine* and others. Although she produced a number of critical appraisals of other women's writing, she was apparently more supportive of their efforts, probably a result of her own struggles. See, *The Autobiography of Margaret Oliphant*, edited by Elisabeth Jay, Oxford University Press, 1990, particularly p.157 and Note 42, pp. 167-8.

²⁹ 'New Novels', Review, *Woman against Woman* by Florence Marryat, 3 vols. Bentley, *Athenaeum*, No. 1999, Feb. 17, 1866, p. 233.

³⁰ Anonymous, [F.M.F. Skene], *Hidden Depths*, 2 vols, Edmonston & Douglas, Edinburgh, 1866. (First published January 1866).

³¹ Review, 'Hidden Depths: Veritas est Major Charitas', *loc. cit.*, pp. 233-4.

³² Guinevere M. Griest, *Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel*, David and Charles, London, 1970, p. 221.

³³ Emily Faithfull cited in Fryckstedt, art. *loc. cit.*, p. 109.

Unhidden Prejudices

One refined example of such double-edged criticism was aimed directly at Felicia Skene and *Hidden Depths*. Soon after the novel's release in January 1866, a detailed, two-column review appeared in the prestigious *Saturday Review* on 10 February 1866. Any initial pleasure that Miss Skene and her publishers, Edmonston and Douglas, experienced at the rapid appearance of a lengthy review in an influential periodical must have surely been offset by its carping criticism and dismal conclusion. This particularly scathing review of Felicia Skene's work aptly illustrates the ways in which women writers of the semi-religious genre were often treated by reviewers and typifies the complaints hurled at women writers who dared to be social critics. In and between almost every line, it demonstrates the critic's application of the 'double critical standard', so often applied to women writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.³⁴

The anonymous reviewer of Miss Skene's book,³⁵ remorselessly 'criticized books worth reading but also expose[d] those to be avoided, ... by stamping out nuisances, and sweeping away rubbish'.³⁶ These strictures were routinely applied to semi-religious novels which were said to be popular only amongst 'Dissenters and Evangelicals ... of little education'.³⁷ He opened the review of *Hidden Depths* with a blunt condemnation:

[A] novel with a purpose is almost always more or less a failure.³⁸

³⁴ The 'double critical standard' embraced a set of concepts which ruled that women had limited imagination and limited experience, and that women compensated for these shortcomings by being emotional rather than rational, and by overvaluing romance in their writing. Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, Virago, London, 1978, pp. 73-99.

³⁵ It is unlikely that the reviewer was a woman. According to Bevington, the records and marked files produced since during Cook's editorship which would have confirmed the writer's identity have long since disappeared. Eliza Lynn Linton (1822-1898) began writing for the *Saturday Review*. Her first review, "Hester's Sacrifice" appeared on April 21, 1866, in Vol. XXI. Bevington, *op. cit.*, pp. 332 and p. 357.

³⁶ Merle Mowbray Bevington, *The Saturday Review 1855-1868: Representative Educated Opinion in Victorian England*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1941, p. 200-1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

³⁸ Anonymous review, 'Hidden Depths', *The Saturday Review*, No. 537, Vol. 21, 10 Feb. 1866, pp. 180-181.

The *Saturday Review* was then one of England's most commanding weekly literary periodicals.³⁹ Its opinions carried respect because it set particularly high standards and possessed a highly-educated readership.⁴⁰ Its writers were hand-picked from amongst England's intellectuals and included university men, literary luminaries and a creditable number of women of letters.⁴¹ Its proprietor, A.J.B. Beresford-Hope, insisted upon the highest ethical standards of journalism from its writers, and its readers, drawn from amongst the "top ten thousand", were said to value and listen to the opinions of the *Saturday's* writers who, in turn, 'professed to speak to and for the educated classes'.⁴²

The *Saturday's* critic had a great deal to say about the basic premise, style and structure of *Hidden Depths*, little of which was complimentary. The exception was the novel's language which was praised as 'pure and well-chosen ... with that preponderance of Saxon words ... characteristic of the best English writing'.⁴³ Praise for its language and artistry was also offered by other literary critics, including the experienced journalist, Samuel Carter Hall. Hall and his wife, Mrs. S. C. Hall, also a popular writer, took the trouble to write to the author whom they had guessed to be a woman, in order to praise the beauty of the novel's language and its 'brave', 'necessary' and 'holy' purpose. Hall complimented the author on writing in 'a pure English style a book devoted to the highest and noblest purposes'.⁴⁴ Others wrote to the author in praise of the novel's drama, whilst an Oxford clergyman, perhaps recognising not only the author but also the

³⁹ Alvar Ellegård estimated the *Saturday Review's* circulation to be 10,000 copies per week in 1860, based upon figures derived from the *Newspaper Press Directory*, [ed. C. Mitchell & Co. London, 1860], Alvar Ellegård, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain*, p. 22.

⁴⁰ In its prospectus of 1855, the *Saturday Review* 'frankly proclaimed its intention to be representative of those who had received the highest education that the nation could afford'. Disraeli, in a letter to Lord Stanley in 1859, acknowledged that it was the educated classes ^{who} were foremost in those who subscribed to the *Saturday Review*. Bevington, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁴¹ Contributions to the *Saturday Review* were regularly commissioned from Lord Robert Cecil, W.V. Harcourt, Goldwin Smith, Walter Bagehot, Max Müller, G.H. Lewes, James Fitzjames Stephen, Mark Pattison and other "youthful literati". Much rarer were women contributors, but over the years, Miss M.C. Houston, Mrs. M. Bennett, Joanna Mary Boyce, George Eliot, Anne Mozley, Emilia Pattison, and the redoubtable Eliza Lynn Linton were all engaged by the *Saturday Review*. Kerry Powell, "The *Saturday Review*", in *British Literary Magazines: The Victorian and Edwardian Age*, Alvin Sullivan, (ed.), Greenwood Press, Connecticut, p. 379, and Bevington, *op. cit.*, pp. 332-387.

⁴² Bevington, *ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴³ *Saturday Review*, *loc. cit.*, p. 180.

⁴⁴ Samuel Carter Hall (1800-1889), was a critic, journalist, literary patron, editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, founder of the *Art Union Journal* and occasional philanthropist. His wife, "Mrs. S.C. Hall", the former Anna Maria Fielding of Dublin (1800-1881), wrote short stories, novels, sketches, plays and children's books. She has been described as genuinely and practically philanthropic and was an active worker for temperance, women's rights and hospitals. Between them, the Halls edited and wrote, independently and jointly, over 500 hundred volumes. Hall wrote in his letter to Miss Skene, "I am sure I address a woman" and went on to say that he thought that the novel was "a brave work to do". E.C. Rickards, *Felicia Skene at Oxford: A Memoir*, John Murray, London, 1902, p. 171-2.

problem she raised, praised the novel for its 'earnestness and modern spiritual feeling'.⁴⁵ The *British Quarterly Review*, on the other hand, dissented from the *Saturday Review* on the question of the novel's language but concluded that 'the purpose of the book would overpower [any] critical fastidiousness about its artistic execution'.⁴⁶ Other critics found little fault with the novel's pure language or plot, but criticized the author's premise. On the subject of the writer's gender, however, they were almost evenly divided.

The *Westminster Review* devoted two full pages to its review and guessed that *Hidden Depths* had been written by 'either a young curate or a woman',⁴⁷ each presumably as naive as ~~the~~ other. The *Contemporary Review* declared outright that the book was a one-sided account — 'a woman's account of woman's wrongs'.⁴⁸ The *Athenaeum's* critic, Geraldine Jewsbury, referred to the author as 'he' throughout her caustic review,⁴⁹ as did the *Fortnightly Review*,⁵⁰ while the *British Quarterly Review* pronounced authoritatively that there was enough 'conclusive evidence, both in knowledge and ignorance of the book, [to state] that the writer is a woman'.⁵¹ Surprisingly, the *Spectator*, which devoted over two and a half columns to its review, was less sure of its ground and hedged on the issue. The book was praised for its 'sincerity and earnestness ... and very considerable power', but the critic referred throughout to the 'author (or authoress)'.⁵²

The *Saturday Review's* critic was adamant that the anonymous author of *Hidden Depths* was a woman, a decision reached by a close and analytical study of the narrative's 'various little peculiarities of thought and style'.⁵³ The *Saturday* was always somewhat obsessed by the so-called 'distinctive peculiarities of female authorship' and its critics

45 Professor George Rolleston, (1829-1881), Linacre professor of anatomy and physiology at Christ Church, Oxford, and an old friend of Felicia Skene, thought that the novel contained some of the finest specimens of English prose. His opinion represents one indication of contemporary taste. The Rev. W.B. Duggan of St. Paul's Oxford praised the novel's 'modern spiritual feeling', while an unnamed but allegedly 'well-known novelist ... was greatly struck by the power of the tale' and admired the novel's dramatic qualities. *Ibid.*, pp. 172-3.

46 *British Quarterly Review*, 43, April, 1866, p. 582. The *British Quarterly Review* readership was predominantly Liberal in politics, and Congregational and Baptist in denomination. Ellegård, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

47 *Westminster Review*, 29, April 1866, p. 587.

48 *Contemporary Review*, 2, May 1866, p.130.

49 *Athenaeum*, [1999], Feb 1866, p. 233.

50 *Fortnightly Review*, 4, Feb. 1866, pp.125-127.

51 *British Quarterly Review*, *loc. cit.*, p. 581.

52 *Spectator*, [1966], March 1866, p. 245. For further discussion on the subject of reviews, see Monica Correa Fryckstedt, 'Hidden Depths: A New Perspective on Victorian Fiction', *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature*, Vol. 70 (2), April 1989, pp. 107-115

53 *Saturday Review*, *loc. cit.*, p. 181.

constantly made pointed remarks in this vein.⁵⁴ In the case of *Hidden Depths*, these 'little peculiarities' revealed not the qualities which S.C. Hall had described triumphantly as the writer's 'noblest purposes', but certain 'obvious' weaknesses which the critic automatically attributed to the distinctive workings of the feminine mind. In the critic's estimation, these wholly unspecified, yet apparently telling, literary quirks provided the vital clues as to the author's gender. The question of gender was placed absolutely beyond doubt when 'she', (the author), displayed her 'utter ignorance' of the particulars of the novel's 'unpleasant' subject matter, namely that of seduction and prostitution. This kind of ignorance, alleged the critic, 'no man, how ever pure his heart and his life, could ... exhibit'.⁵⁵

Central to *Hidden Depth's* convoluted plot was the city of Oxford, Christ Church Cathedral, the surrounding university colleges and dark back-lane slums, all of which Miss Skene had thinly disguised under the fictional name of "Greyburgh". Peaceful quadrangles, gleaming spires and green water meadows were woven into the fictional fabric, yet this critic doubted both the setting and the novel's truthfulness. The issue here was credibility. The critic expressed profound disbelief that a 'lady authoress', or any other lady for that matter, could have gained a thorough knowledge of the interior of gaols or houses of ill-repute. This was curious since the review mentioned the work of midnight missionaries more than once.⁵⁶ Apparently it did not occur to the critic that the author might well have visited brothels and gaols, or played a role in philanthropic 'rescue' missions, nor that, in attempting to protect reputations, the author had disguised the institutions and the city in which she lived. It was glibly suggested instead that the author had 'evolved her materials out of her internal consciousness'.⁵⁷

Within the novel's pages, 'strong internal evidence' indicated to the *Saturday's* reviewer that the author had not personally investigated some particularly loathsome locations, although the author had described them with careful attention to detail. The

54 This brand of criticism was revealed earlier in an anonymous review (attributed to Miss M[atilda] C[hariotte] Houston). In writing about a 'lacteal' novel entitled, *Hazel Coombe*, the critic complained longwindedly about the 'weaknesses and distinctive peculiarities of female authorship'. *Saturday Review*, XVII, 23 Jan. 1864, cited in Bevington, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

55 *Saturday Review*, *loc. cit.*, p. 181.

56 Midnight missionaries were 'ladies by birth and instinct' who worked to reclaim 'fallen women'. The Midnight Meeting movement, established to encourage prostitutes to leave 'the game', began in the 1860s. Ann R. Higginbotham, 'Respectable Sinners: Salvation Army Rescue Work with Unmarried Mothers, 1884-1914', in Gail Malmgreen, (ed.), *Religion in the Lives of English Women 1760-1930*, Croom Helm, London, 1986, p. 217.

57 The *Saturday Review's* critic referred specifically to the description of a Greyburgh [Oxford] brothel described by Miss Skene in detail on page 20, Vol. 2 of *Hidden Depths*. Miss Skene had learned of brothel locations from discussions she held with female inmates of the Oxford Penitentiary during her frequent visits and from women at the Oxford Refuge.

buildings that were singled out for sceptical comment bore an uncanny resemblance to Oxford's city gaol and to a local brothel disguised as a boarding house, both of which Miss Skene had indeed visited. She had accompanied her mentor, the Reverend Thomas Chamberlain, on his crusades to save 'lost women ... against the keepers of bad houses'. In life she 'did not shrink from ... entering "such abodes of degradation" where she thought a personal [rescue] effort could alone avail', but in fiction she was apparently not permitted to write about such things.⁵⁸ The brothel in question had been described in a recent coroner's report of a case of child-murder, and in her tortuous plot Miss Skene had fictionalised the brothel owner, "Mrs. Dorrell" and the murderous circumstances of this case.⁵⁹ More than a century later, literary historian, John Sutherland, described the brothel scenes in *Hidden Depths* as 'horrific' and 'unusually realistic for the 1860s'.⁶⁰ The *Saturday's* critic was much harder to convince.

Judging from the posture adopted on these crucial issues, the critic was almost certainly a man irritated, or at least unnerved, by many of the novel's themes. The plot involves Ernestine Courtenay - 'a noble woman' - cruelly deceived by her fiance, Hugh Lingard. She discovers that the man she had trusted and promised to marry is the seducer of a young girl, Rosie, whom Ernestine had 'rescued' from prostitution. The awful moment of truth transpires at Rosie's bedside as she lay dying:

Hugh Lingard ... was standing there in the door-way, with a look of horror and dismay on his face such as no words would paint, while his eyes were fixed on the dying girl with unmistakable recognition; his arms fell slowly to his sides, and the one word, 'Rosie!' escaped involuntarily from his lips. In a moment Ernestine saw it all. The truth flashed upon her soul in all its details, with that irresistible conviction which seems almost like an inspiration from heaven. She knew in that moment, with a terrible knowledge which could never pass away from her, that the destroyer of this child, whom God had sent her to seek throughout the world, was that

⁵⁸ In the typical style of Victorian hagiography, Skene's biographer judged that Felicia Skene's 'whole soul must have recoiled from such abodes of degradation [brothels]'. Rickards, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-3. While Rickards and others, including Felicia Skene's old friend, writer Mrs. Humphry Ward, recoiled from the thought of such abodes, Miss Skene continued with her rescue work in Oxford for many years.

⁵⁹ Skene had used evidence from an actual case. It was alleged that two infants had been deliberately burnt to death in Oxford. Rickards refers to this case in passing in her biography of Skene. Between 1860 to 1865, infanticide emerged as an issue of national importance. Cases of child-murder and infanticide were the subject of many press reports, some sensational, which demanded 'attention from a public normally content to ignore, ostrich-like, unpleasant social realities'. Home Office studies and numerous journal articles referred to specific cases, whilst Metropolitan statistical societies published their Transactions on the subject of child-murder from the 1860s, produced from judicial statistics gathered by local authorities and coroners' courts. Official statistics were documented and published by the Registrar-General. Child-murder was of great concern and was continuously 'in the news'. For a full discussion, see George K. Behlmer, 'The Child Protection Movement in England, 1860-1890', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, California, 1977, pp. 33-4 and esp. Chapters III & IV.

⁶⁰ Sutherland, *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction*, p. 295.

very man who was dearer to her than life itself, and in whom her whole earthly happiness was bound up only too fatally. It was like the shock of an earthquake to her thus to learn that the truth and goodness, in which she had believed so fondly as being his special characteristic, had in fact never existed.⁶¹

Throughout the narrative, Miss Skene confronted a range of social issues including the scourge of “baby-farming”, prostitution, prisons, workhouses, female punishment and penitentiaries, female employment and emigration, and the inherent dangers of modern, scientific, education, suicide and religious doubt. Despite these contemporary references, the critic remained thoroughly sceptical of the author’s claims to veracity. Similarly, contempt was voiced for the female author’s simplified view of the sexual double standard and the opposition of ‘male vice’ juxtaposed against ‘female virtue’.⁶²

This critic was presumably unaware that Felicia Skene’s opinions derived from visiting female inmates of Oxford City Gaol since 1854, and that she was the anonymous author of an authoritative article, ‘Penitentiaries and Reformatories,’ written on the subject of prostitution and reform which had appeared a year earlier in 1865, in the Scottish periodical, *Odds and Ends*.⁶³ The comments and observations made in this anonymous article were based entirely upon Felicia Skene’s personal investigations and experience of penitentiaries in England and France, and as a regular visitor to the Oxford Refuge where she had interviewed at length the ‘victims’ of seduction.

By coincidence, the *Fortnightly Review* had reviewed the novel *Hidden Depths* in tandem with Skene’s anonymous article, ‘Penitentiaries and Reformatories’ which she had written as a direct result of her social work. The reviewer, John Dennis, in the *Fortnightly*’s “Critical Notices”, noted that although both were written upon the “social evil”, the respective authors had treated the same subject in ‘a very different fashion’. Dennis failed to discern the common identity of the two “authors” and the vital connection between the separate publications. He criticised *Hidden Depths* as ‘valueless as a work of art’, but thanked the writer for bringing the unmentionable subject out into the open in the form of a “special case”. He then went on to praise the author’s brevity and the

⁶¹ *Hidden Depths*, Vol. 2, p. 199.

⁶² Notwithstanding the critic’s irritation, such views were ubiquitous and expressed in varying written forms by influential contemporaries. Men such as William Acton, unidentified “ladies” later to include the activist, Josephine Butler, and essayists and novelists including W.R. Greg, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens and others, all professed to this belief. See Judith R. Walkowitz, ‘Male vice and female virtue: feminism and the politics of prostitution in nineteenth century England’, in (eds.), Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson, *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, New York, 1983, p. 422.

⁶³ Anonymous, [F.M.F. Skene], ‘Penitentiaries and Reformatories’, *Odds and Ends*, Vol. 1, No. 6, Edmonston and Douglas, Edinburgh, 1865, pp. 3-32.

factual content of 'Penitentiaries and Reformatories' declaring that 'the tract on Penitentiaries compresses in a few pages all the arguments which in the tale are spread over two volumes'.⁶⁴

The *Saturday*'s critic, like Dennis, was ignorant of these important linkages and wishing neither to condemn the worthy aims of the writer outright nor leave himself open to the possibility of a libel suit, added a crucial disclaimer to his notice:

[W]e hasten to acquit the writer of any desire to use this repulsive topic to gratify prurient curiosity, or to appeal to the morbid appetite for what is called "sensational" literature.⁶⁵

The *Saturday Review* took the relatively unusual step of reproducing the author's preface in full. Here the anonymous author claimed the book to be 'not a work of fiction' but rather a novel based upon 'actual truth', however one suspects that the preface was only printed in order to ridicule and demolish the author's claims. The novel's frontispiece was embellished with the motto, 'Veritas est Major Charitas' [Truth is the Greater Charity], and indicated the author's purposeful claim for factual veracity. Readers were forewarned that the topics revealed were 'no fit subjects for a romance, nor ought they to be opened up ... for purposes of mere amusement'.⁶⁶ The critic acknowledged that the writer's 'earnestness' gave the novel a 'character of life-likeness', but then declared that the 'foundations upon which the edifice is based are utterly unsound'.⁶⁷

Unlike the *British Quarterly Review*'s critic who had expressed the opinion that 'the book is more excellent as an instrument of reformation than as fiction',⁶⁸ the *Saturday*'s critic rated the book 'more highly as a work of fiction than as an instrument of social reform'.⁶⁹ The *Saturday Review* took a hard line on this particular issue. Almost as a matter of policy, its critics refused to accept the notion that literature, and fiction in particular, could be a powerful social force or that it might influence readers' thinking. Charles Dickens had been soundly criticised by the *Saturday Review* for believing that his fiction had played any role in achieving social and legislative reforms, and the anonymous

⁶⁴ John Dennis, *Fortnightly Review*, loc. cit., pp. 125-127.

⁶⁵ *Saturday Review*, loc. cit., p. 180.

⁶⁶ *Hidden Depths*, Preface, op. cit., Spelling of "Charitas" as published in 1866 edition.

⁶⁷ *Saturday Review*, loc. cit., p. 180.

⁶⁸ *British Quarterly Review*, loc. cit., p. 582.

⁶⁹ *Saturday Review*, loc. cit., p. 180.

author of *Hidden Depths* was similarly disabused. With a note of tired resignation the critic informed readers that:

[t]he evil whose hidden depths she has attempted, though feebly, to explore is ... too vast and too deeply rooted to be written down or preached down'.⁷⁰

Such sour judgment worked to undermine the novelist's primary reforming aim. The critic insisted that as with all 'novels with a purpose' this one sacrificed its literary powers to enforce one special moral, thus stripping the plot of any real parallels in what he termed, 'actual life'. In his opinion, this procrustean element weakened the novel's veracity and in consequence, effectively diminished its chances of having any lasting impact on the public's social and moral conscience. Yet, ever mindful that he was addressing a 'lady novelist', as well as his more 'thoughtful' readers whom he conceded might 'be induced to reflect [upon] the hypothetical circumstances of the book', the critic patronisingly bestowed the writer with 'credit for thorough sincerity'.⁷¹

The critic's discomfiture and ambivalence over the novel's controversial themes were manifest in the short homily which concluded the review, justifying his own position by offering an essentialist argument on the 'unpleasant' subject. Two familiar and over-worked propositions were advanced: the first accepted the inevitable weaknesses of 'human nature' in both males and females, and the second assumed the inevitability of prostitution:

So long as human nature continues to be sinful, this particular sin is sure to flourish. Missionaries and midnight meetings may lop off a few branches, but the roots will still remain.⁷²

At one level this reads as an apologia, reflecting upon the sinful imperfections of humanity and seeks to absolve the critic by its note of regret and bewailing of the sordid "facts of life". From the perspective of a mid-nineteenth-century female reformer such as Felicia Skene, however, it was simply an affirmation of the status-quo.⁷³ It suggests immutability and hopeless fatalism, and implicitly argues for the continued acceptance of

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Josephine Butler expressed her disgust at this line of argument in 1871. At a public meeting held in Croydon against the Contagious Diseases Acts, she said, "it is an awful and astounding fact that a very large and influential portion of England society has made up its mind to accept prostitution with all its train of moral horrors, as a necessary and inevitable portion of Christian civilisation". Barbara Dennis & David Sifton, (eds.), *Reform and Intellectual Debate in Victorian England*, Croom Helm, London, 1987, p. 163.

hypocritical sexual double standards. Either way, such mute acceptance and resignation was anathema to Miss Skene who wrote the novel from a religious and moral viewpoint which embraced the concept of free will and the ability of individuals to make moral choices on the basis of Christian teachings.

The 'particular sin' and 'repulsive topic' on which the *Saturday's* critic harped was the book's central concern - the "social evil", or as he put it more plainly, 'the dark regions of seduction and prostitution'.⁷⁴ Yet his major criticism of the novel turned upon the author's feminine ignorance which, he complained, assumed that the 'generality of men are deliberate seducers ... and that the whole of the unfortunates who throng our streets are victims of seduction'.⁷⁵ The fatal flaw of the novel was, therefore, not its language, nor even its unpleasant subject, but its anti-male bias.

Others also found Miss Skene's committed approach unrealistic and unreasonable. The *Fortnightly's* critic, for example, complained that the author took it for granted that 'men are always the aggressors and women always the victims, that like hawks we pounce upon the feebler sex as our prey'. He reminded readers of the Old Testament tale of Potiphar's wife and Joseph, the irreproachable male servant.⁷⁶ The *Spectator* amplified this point suggesting that the author had fallen into the trap of 'speaking of men as the sole originators of this most destructive of vices' whilst ignoring the 'many cases in which the guilt of the first contaminating influence lies with the woman.'⁷⁷ Unlike her critics, Felicia Skene was not concerned with establishing what she called 'the balance of comparative guilt' since this had already been achieved through a 'social law which protects the sin [of profligate men] in the one case, and hunts it down in another' by punishing "fallen women".⁷⁸ Her practical and fictional mission was concerned ultimately with exposing social hypocrisy and thereby hastening 'God's estimate of right and wrong and the measure of HIS [sic] justice'.⁷⁹

The anonymous author of *Hidden Depths* and the *Saturday's* readers were together reminded that 'if a reform [of prostitution] be needed ... it is a reform that women alone can institute'— that there were 'none so harsh as women to a fallen sister'. While willing to recognise the author's 'passionate protest throughout the book against the injustice of society which punishes so unequally in the two sexes against the sins of

⁷⁴ *Saturday Review*, loc. cit., p. 180.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁷⁶ *Fortnightly Review*, loc. cit., p. 125.

⁷⁷ *Spectator*, loc. cit., p. 245.

⁷⁸ *Hidden Depths*, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 222

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 106.

chastity',⁸⁰ the critic turned the argument back against *all* women. In seeking to expose the real 'offenders', he referred to two classes of women whom he classified as 'wretched beings ... nurtured in the haunts of vice and crime ... where the name and idea of chastity are unknown', and those who took to the streets 'as the easiest and most natural means of earning their daily bread', wanton females, 'led astray by the temptations of drink or dress ... or the love of gaiety'.⁸¹ These 'damned whores' led men astray.⁸²

Notwithstanding the author's supposedly "feeble" attempts to expose evil and raise consciences, the critic was 'disposed to place *Hidden Depths* in a very much higher rank than the majority of novels by lady-writers.'⁸³ Such desultory praise was almost unique in a periodical which showed little sympathy for the aims of reforming female novelists. Considering the hostility of its opening edict, the review closed on a suprisingly conciliatory note. Having exposed its weaknesses and undermined the book's reforming intentions throughout, the critic indicated that he personally 'would be glad to believe that the book would effect some good result'.⁸⁴

Carping Critics and Responsive Audiences

Ironically, in spite of this critic's clear intention to demolish the novel under the weight of trenchant criticism, it had already achieved the writer's primary purpose. Regardless of its alleged naivety, predictable plot and stereotypical depictions of female heroines, fallen women and profligate men, *Hidden Depths* had successfully initiated heated debate in the leading literary periodicals of the day upon a taboo subject. It had caused some, including male critics, to think, and it caused others in authority to act.⁸⁵ *Hidden Depths* was probably amongst the first novels "with a purpose" to deal with such controversial matters as prostitution, suicide, and murder.

80 *Saturday Review*, loc. cit., p. 181.

81 *Ibid.*

82 I have used Anne Summers term here, and seen in the context of Summer's analysis, Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker would have been viewed as 'God's Police'. Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police*, (1st published 1975, Allen Lane, Penguin U.K.). Revised edition, Penguin Books Australia, 1994.

83 *Saturday Review*, loc. cit., p. 181.

84 *Ibid.*

85 As a direct result of her work, both written and practical, Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol and Vice Chancellor of the University, appealed to Miss Skene for advice on how to control the extra-mural activities of undergraduates with Oxford's prostitute population. Dr. Pusey consulted with Miss Skene on the same subject as she was then the acknowledged 'expert' on the subject in Oxford. Rickards, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-151.

By entering the public world as a didactic novelist with a reforming agenda, Felicia Skene was in an indefensible position in the eyes of the *Saturday Review*. She had committed manifold sins. First, she had written a novel with a purpose and second, she had utilised the novel to agitate and propagandize. Not only had she offended the *Saturday Review*'s lofty literary sensibilities by producing a novel on a 'repulsive topic', but she had also made an open attack on men's behaviour and demanded their punishment and moral reform. Given these considerations, it was puzzling to find her novel publicized extensively when it could have been as easily ignored. One may assume that the *Saturday* was indulging in its usual slashing tactics, but Edmonston & Douglas, Felicia's publisher's, had distributed a number of review copies hoping for wide publicity, favourable or otherwise. When seen in the context of an important literary essay, "Novels, Past and Present", which appeared in the *Saturday Review* less than eight weeks later in April 1866, it seemed that reviewing *Hidden Depths* or any other 'novel with a purpose', was a conspicuous waste of space and printer's ink.

Above all, the *Saturday Review*'s derogatory review of *Hidden Depths*, provides a prime example of the often contradictory criticism which semi-religious novels received. Its careful choice of language exudes an air of contempt—albeit respectful contempt—for Felicia Skene's intellect. It denies her expertise and also manages to impugn "the majority of novels written by lady writers". The critique illuminates the way in which Skene's novel on prostitution was dissected by many and also places it within the context of contemporary discourse on the subject of illicit sexual relations, a subject which the *Saturday*'s critic claimed, mistakenly, that 'most people prefer not to think about at all'.⁸⁶

Felicia Skene's book, along with Hesba Stretton's and Charlotte Maria Tucker's short novels and tales released in the same year, should be seen in the context of the 1860s debate concerning the form and function of the English novel. The *Saturday Review*, in common with other periodicals of its class, including the august *Quarterly Review*, questioned the novel's ultimate purpose.⁸⁷ For intellect and depth of understanding, the *Saturday Review* found little in contemporary English writing to compare with, for example, the profound philosophical novels of the French writer, Balzac. In their judgment, English novelists such as Charles Dickens, (and presumably Felicia Skene and others like her), either meddled or tended to 'abstain from any *bonâ*

⁸⁶ *Saturday Review*, loc. cit., p. 181.

⁸⁷ The *Quarterly Review* refused to publish poetry or fiction. John Murray III continued his father's ban on both. Murray's also rejected most manuscripts submitted by women. Elizabeth Rigby, (later Lady Eastlake) (1809-1893) proved to be the exception to Murray's house rule and was a regular and valued contributor. "George Paston" [Emily Morse Symonds], *At John Murray's: Records of a Literary Circle 1843-1892*, John Murray, London, 1932, pp. 29-39.

fide attempt to investigate the great problems of life'.⁸⁸ On that score, Charles Dickens's works had been harshly criticised.⁸⁹ The *Saturday Review*'s prolific contributor and critic, Fitzjames Stephen denied that any fiction, including that of the popular Dickens, had the power to influence thinking, legislative change or 'to remedy social ills'.⁹⁰ But above all other functional, aesthetic or literary considerations, both the *Saturday Review* and the *Quarterly Review* were especially harsh in their attitude towards and criticism of, novels known with absolute certainty to have been written by women. Women, in their view, were generally intellectually inferior to men.⁹¹

Virginia Woolf knew the power of criticism from watching her father, the respected *Saturday Review* critic, Leslie Stephen, make or break literary reputations. She observed that most Victorian literary criticism of women's fiction and novel writing not only engaged in censure and ridicule but also assumed the inherent inferiority of women's writing.⁹² The critics' opinions were backed up by current medical and anthropological theories which maintained that smaller brain size and the demanding female reproductive cycle, reduced women's creative and intellectual capacities.⁹³

Most readers, including sagacious critics and the experienced publisher, John Blackwood, instantly presupposed that George Eliot's outstanding literary talents were masculine in origin. Blackwood was pleased to have his opinion backed up by G.H. Lewes that this creative writer was indeed, an 'English clergyman'.⁹⁴ Jane Welsh Carlyle, the critic's astute wife, decreed Eliot's first novel, *Scenes From a Clerical Life*, to be 'written by a man of middle age' and addressed the writer as "Dear Sir". J.M. Froude, never doubted the writer's gender but could not tell if the writer was 'a young man or an old'. W.M. Thackeray thought highly of Eliot's writing, insisting that "Scenes" 'were never written by a woman'.⁹⁵

Masculine critics, even those rare individuals who could find some merit in women's writing, still 'strained their ingenuity' to find the right words to describe the

⁸⁸ Bevington, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-155.

⁸⁹ The *Saturday Review* was particularly critical of Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, *Little Dorrit*, and *David Copperfield*. *Ibid.*, p. 156-161.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-7.

⁹¹ The only exception to the *Saturday Review*'s implicit policy was made for the work of George Eliot. Her novels were admired as 'works of high seriousness'. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁹² Virginia Woolf, *Women and Writing*, (Introduction by Michele Barrett), The Women's Press, London, 1979, p. 47.

⁹³ Showalter, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

⁹⁴ Gordon Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography*, Penguin, Middlesex, 1985, p. 215.

⁹⁵ Charles Dickens was one of the few writers who immediately recognised a woman's hand in George Eliot's writing. *Ibid.*, pp. 251-252.

'specialness of women' and the perceived feminine affinity with fiction; praise, if proffered, was to excuse women's supposed ignorance and naivety.⁹⁶ John Stuart Mill might have excused married women, but condemned the actions of single philanthropic and religious women. He wrote of 'the greatly increasing number of women with the consciousness of thwarted vocations [marriage and family] ... whose only resources ... are religion and charity'. They were, as he put it, 'addicted' to philanthropy and religious proselytism. Mill insisted that for many single women—the "singular anomalies"—philanthropy was not a 'religion of action' but merely an inactive religion of sentimental 'feeling'.⁹⁷ If Mill saw only 'addiction' in these actions, Skene, Stretton and Tucker were more positive; they saw 'usefulness' and purpose. Women who wrote and performed philanthropic acts were thus doubly condemned and critics were, as Elaine Showalter explains, 'responding to what seemed like a revolutionary, and in many ways a very threatening phenomenon'.⁹⁸

Most novels of the day, especially those identified as written by women, were classified by the *Saturday Review* and similar literary reviews as frivolous commodities; novels were regarded as "light literature", an airy phrase used pejoratively to connote a lack of seriousness and substance.⁹⁹ The popularity of novels, especially semi-religious novels, also counted as a sin, at least within elite literary circles—it was George Eliot who had famously condemned religious novels as "hateful" books and as 'monsters we do not know how to class'.¹⁰⁰ Unable or unwilling to accept the growing popularity of novels of all genres, including the semi-religious, many critics retreated to higher literary ground condemning both novelists who aspired to write novels as entertainment and those who 'used the novel as a vehicle ... for attacks on abuses' or as propaganda for social reform.¹⁰¹ The *Saturday* censured novels it considered 'superficial', those which

96 Joseph Kestner argues in the Introduction to his reappraisal, *Protest and Reform: The British Social Narrative by Women, 1827-1867*, Methuen, London, 1985, that women's writings and the social protest narrative which appeared in a variety of formats from the 1840s onwards, were accorded increasing respect by critics. This is, I think, a generous view bestowed with the benefit of hindsight. John Stuart Mill, G.H. Lewes and R. H. Hutton had all severely criticised women writers for their 'sentimentality' at different times. Hutton proposed that 'lack of imagination was the main deficiency of feminine genius'. This tendency is the 'double critical standard', accurately described by Showalter, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

97 John Stuart Mill, *On the Subjection of Women*, London, 1869, p. 98 and p. 87.

98 Showalter, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

99 The essayist and critic, W.R. Greg, whilst berating 'impressionable young lady readers' for reading only novels, nonetheless, acknowledged 'the importance and effectiveness of the novel' by reason of its very 'lightness'. [William Rathbone Greg], 'False Morality of Lady Novelists', *Westminster Review*, Vol. 7, Jan. 1959, pp. 144-5.

100 George Eliot in 1839, cited in Margaret Maison, *Search Your Soul, Eustace, Victorian Religious Novels*, Sheed & Ward, London, 1961, p. 2. [Source unidentified].

101 *Ibid.*,

forwarded 'a sentimental view of human character,' and those which 'relied upon sensational incident for interest'.¹⁰²

The foremost didactic male novelists of the day, notably Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, both specialists in energetic, moralistic and didactic tales of "muscular Christianity",¹⁰³ were usually treated sympathetically in comparison to their female counterparts, Charlotte M. Yonge and Dinah Mulock [Craik]. These women were equally, if not more popular, but were reviewed with 'amused tolerance' and respectful condescension.¹⁰⁴

Semi-religious fiction as a distinct genre apparently projected a 'womanly' aura; G.H. Lewes and George Eliot ascribed this 'womanly' trait to "idle" and "silly women novelists". On the other hand, lay readers and eminent philanthropists including Lord Shaftesbury and Florence Nightingale, found much to praise in the same quality. Having read a number of Hesba Stretton's works, including *Jessica's First Prayer* (an immediate best-seller), and *A Thorny Path*, both agreed upon the writer's skill and the fiction's impact. Their concerns were probably less aesthetic and more practical than literary critics, but moved by an awareness of a woman's sensibilities in Stretton's narratives, both Nightingale and Shaftesbury agreed upon its strengths and effectiveness. Lord Shaftesbury praised Miss Stretton's work publicly for its 'nature, simplicity and pathos' and its 'depth of Christian feeling' and noted the writer's accurate observations of social conditions. He concluded that 'no man on earth could have composed a page of it'.¹⁰⁵

Miss Nightingale found Stretton's fictional depictions amongst the most perceptive insights into the best and worst aspects of English domestic life. Recalling details of *A Thorny Path* to her sister, she wrote admiringly of its 'strong exposition of natural and poetical justice'. Incidents in the tale concerning a mother's desertion of a child "Little Dot", and the child's subsequent rescue by "Don", one of the tale's heroes, were, for Nightingale, 'so true in this true story'. She immediately recognised that the sacrificial death of "Don" caused by malnutrition attempting to keep "Little Dot" alive, was a modern Christian allegory. She wrote, 'I suppose it is an attempt to show Christ's life living and dying for another'.¹⁰⁶ For such readers deeply involved in philanthropy, it

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁰³ T.C. Sandars, critic for the *Saturday Review*, introduced the term 'muscular Christianity' in his review of Charles Kingsley's novel *Two Years Ago*, which appeared in the *Saturday Review* in February, 1857. [*Saturday Review*, III, Feb. 21, 1857, pp. 176-77]. Bevington, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁰⁵ Lord Shaftesbury re: *Jessica's First Prayer*. Letter to the Editor of *The Record*, 28 Nov. 1867. Item 928/1, Shropshire County Record Office, Shrewsbury, England.

¹⁰⁶ Florence Nightingale wrote to her sister, Lady Parthenope Verney that the 'hero waifs and strays in *A Thorny Path* like "Don" [one of Hesba Stretton's typical "good" men], who died while looking

was these obvious qualities of womanliness and compassion which endowed Hesba Stretton's writing with a transcendent and distinctive appeal.

However, in the first instance, critics were influential. As a direct consequence of their entrenched attitudes, very few novelists, with the notable exception of George Eliot, W.M. Thackeray and Anthony Trollope, ever received the *Saturday's* wholehearted approval. It was not at all surprising therefore, given the combination of *Saturday's* strict criteria and Felicia Skene's agenda and plot, that *Hidden Depths*, failed the *Saturday's* acid test.

"Novels - Past and Present"

Having permitted the expenditure of precious column inches on *Hidden Depths*, the 'novel with a purpose', in February 1866, the *Saturday's* editor passed an announcement in April 1866 which proved to be curiously misjudged. In a prominent two-page article headed innocuously, "Novels, Past and Present", the *Saturday Review* discussed in fine detail, the history and the future of the contemporary novel.¹⁰⁷ The overall tone of the essay was careful and even polite. The writer carefully expanded upon novels of the past and described the didactic novels of the 'pre-Braddonian period,' that is, before 1862. Didactic novels, it said, had identifiable merits, the major one being to 'uphold the highest possible standard of female morality'.¹⁰⁸ The sensational and popular novels of M.E. Braddon had essentially changed all that.¹⁰⁹ The 'earthy and sensuous tones' of the new genre of 'sensation' novels were not 'admirable' and had 'contributed in no small way to debauched taste and lead the judgment [of young women] astray'.¹¹⁰ Having disclaimed the sensation novel and pointedly exalted the aims and merits of the didactic Miss Yonges, Miss Mulocks and Miss Sewells of the literary world, the writer went on to proclaim a small but significant heresy.

Nowadays, the purely didactic or semi-religious novel is virtually obsolete.¹¹¹

after the abandoned waif, "Little Dot", were 'never Godforsaken'. MS 1138, *Nightingale Archives*, Claydon House Trust. Buckinghamshire, England.

107 'Novels, Past and Present', *The Saturday Review*, April 14, 1866, pp. 438-440.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 439

109 The critic was referring to M[ary E[lizabeth] Braddon (1835-1915), the doyen of the 'sensational' school of writing. M.E. Braddon's first notable success was *Lady Audley's Secret*, (1862). She went on to write eighty novels, fifty-seven of which were issued as "yellowback" novels for railway reading. She always enjoyed a 'love-hate' relationship with the critics.

110 *Saturday Review*, *loc. cit.*, p. 439

111 *Ibid.*

Whilst this announcement was probably not dramatic or upsetting news for some readers with sophisticated tastes or a liking for sensational literature, it must have come as a surprise to the popular novelist, Dinah Mulock Craik, whose recent work was identified in the article as an 'anachronism'.¹¹² Similarly, it might have surprised others whose novels in this specific genre continued to sell strongly.¹¹³ Felicia Skene's recent semi-religious and didactic novel had been reviewed extensively within the *Saturday's* pages but also in ten other leading periodicals, including the influential *Athenaeum* and *Spectator*. Given that the *Saturday Review* held this opinion, why had they bothered to review her book in the first place. Was their intention to destroy the semi-religious genre single-handedly?

It is worth flagging that the *Saturday Review* was well-known for the 'cocksure' and 'smart writing' of some of its spirited contributors,¹¹⁴ although its fastidious editor, John Douglas Cook, proclaimed that the periodical took a moderate line, seeking always to strike 'a unity and consistency of tone'.¹¹⁵ Yet, in frequent contravention of its professed policy of 'measured statements' and 'liberal opinions',¹¹⁶ contributing critics often vented personal opinion and spurts of "venom"¹¹⁷ upon unsuspecting victims, earning the *Saturday Review* a series of nicknames including that of "Saturday Reviler".¹¹⁸

Yet, the *Saturday Review* was no scandal sheet and never engaged the services of impoverished literary hacks to vandalize authors' works. The *Saturday* took pride in the

¹¹² The article opened with a rather odd back-handed salute to Miss Muloch's [*sic*] recent novel, *A Noble Life*, (2 vols.), Hurst & Blackett, London, 1866. The reviewer noted that the novel was 'not the less welcome because it is an anachronism'. *Ibid.*, p. 438.

¹¹³ Charlotte M. Yonge's novels were even more popular in her day than those of Dickens or Thackeray. "Afterword" by Georgina Battiscombe in *The Clever Woman of the Family*, Charlotte M. Yonge, (1865), reprinted, Virago, London, 1985, pp. 368-372. [Georgina Battiscombe was Miss Yonge's biographer.]

¹¹⁴ J.D. Jump, 'Weekly Reviewing in the Eighteen-Sixties', *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. III, New Series, No. 11, July, 1952, p. 253.

¹¹⁵ Bevington, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

¹¹⁶ The *Saturday Review's* statement of principles was published in full on its establishment in November, 1855. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

¹¹⁷ James Grant, the author of *The Saturday Review, Its Origin and Progress: Its Contributors and Characters, with Illustrations of the Mode in Which It Is Conducted*, London, 1873, repeated a 'malicious and facetious rumour' that Cook 'often altered contributions to put more "venom in"'. Cited in Bevington, *op. cit.*, p. 39. It was not uncommon to discover sheltering discreetly within the *Saturday's* respected pages eulogies and iconoclastic darts, both of which could make or break a writer's reputation. Bevington refers specifically to John Morley's trenchant criticism in the *Saturday Review* (Aug. 1866), of the 'libidinous' poems of Swinburne. Sir Edmund Gosse said that this criticism "created a prejudiced conception of the poet [from which] he suffered to the end of his life". *Ibid.*, pp. 220-1.

¹¹⁸ Bevington lists the following alternative titles: The "Saturday Reviler", "Saturday Scorpion", "Saturday Snarler", "Free Lance of the Press", "Ishmael of Literature", "Slasher", "Scourge", "Slanderer", and "Butcher". The "Saturday Reviler" was the staff's particular favourite. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-4.

exclusivity of its writers and its class appeal and, from its establishment in 1855, aspired to be 'the mouthpiece of middle moderate opinions of thoughtful and educated society'. For most of the *Saturday's* history it was known as the "voice of England".¹¹⁹ Its voice, however, was an anonymous one—no pseudonyms or bylines were permitted—it mattered little how distinguished was the writer, each had to comply with the house rule and write anonymously.¹²⁰ This assisted the *Saturday's* editor in unifying the journal's style, but more importantly, it allowed contributors and critics to comment freely upon topical events and literary matters in a tone of 'acidic superiority'.¹²¹

Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker were all avid readers of literary periodicals and journals and, naturally, were particularly anxious consumers when waiting for reviews of their latest books.¹²² Amongst the favoured periodicals to be read for information and pleasure were *Blackwood's Magazine*, the *North British Review* and the *Quarterly*, in addition to various denominational religious periodicals and those which were read mainly for their style and ideas. In time, each writer became a contributor to many of the most popular journals and, as will be discussed below, Felicia Skene and Charlotte Tucker edited two journals, *The Churchman's Companion* and the *Children's Treasury*.

Hesba Stretton's sister, Lizzie, kept many press cuttings of Stretton's reviews, and Hesba recorded the appearance of the most favourable reviews in her Log Books. Felicia Skene noted favourable reviews of her books and articles in letters to friends and always mentioned them to her publisher, William Blackwood, no doubt to remind him modestly of the "little" successes she had achieved elsewhere. Charlotte Maria Tucker had to watch the reviews carefully in 1852 to see if her first book, *The Claremont Tales*, had actually been published.¹²³ Keeping abreast with literary reviews and contemporary

119 Kerry Powell, 'The *Saturday Review*', in *British Literary Magazines: The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913*, Edited by Alvin Sullivan, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, p. 379.

120 Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 380.

121 Christopher Kent, Introduction, *ibid*, p. xix. See also Christopher Kent's article, 'Higher Journalism and the Mid-Victorian Clerisy', *Victorian Studies*, December, 1969, pp. 181-198, in which anonymity is discussed in detail, with particular reference to the *Saturday Review*.

122 Hesba Stretton and Felicia Skene both read and wrote for *Fraser's Magazine* at various times. Hesba Stretton had wide access to periodicals whilst working in her father's book shop in Wellington. The well-stocked home library of James Skene provided Felicia Skene with a wide range of periodicals and her association with *Blackwood's Magazine* was one of long standing. Little is known about Charlotte Maria Tucker's reading habits but she read the *Quarterly Review* and referred to it specifically in her preface to *The Rambles of a Rat*, (1857).

123 It will be recalled that Charlotte Maria Tucker first sent her manuscript anonymously to W. & R. Chambers. They passed it on to Gall & Inglis who published without reference to the author. A.L.O.E's biographer wrote: 'One can imagine how eagerly Charlotte, while preserving her strict incognita, must have watched [the reviews] for the appearance of her *Tales* and to see her name advertised'. It was also through the reviews that A.L.O.E learned that her book had been

debates on social issues could only be achieved by reading widely, and the phenomenon was noted, even in fiction. “Rachel Curtis”, the energetic and philanthropic heroine of Charlotte Yonge’s novel, *Clever Woman of the Family*, had all her ‘sympathies ... necessarily fed, by periodical literature’.¹²⁴

As writers engaged in writing distinctive and successful forms of didactic and semi-religious fiction, it is likely that Skene, Stretton and Tucker also kept up with the *Saturday Review*’s occasional series on literature. If they had, they could not have missed the *Saturday Review*’s pronouncement of the ‘virtual obsolescence’ of their literary genre. Since there was a steady if not an expanding market for such fiction, (though admittedly not amongst the literati), the pronouncement seemed a fallacy. However, anxious to protect their anonymity, each let the *Saturday*’s claim pass.

From what is known, it might be supposed that the writers and their publishers refused to enter the debate or to speak out in their own defence, not because of indifference or insensitivity to such criticism, but from a refusal to participate in a public slanging match involving religious beliefs and “their” genre. These women, like the critic himself, had deliberately chosen to write anonymously and refused to identify themselves. In this way, they conformed to the genteel conventions of feminine propriety and modesty expected of women in their social position. It would have been completely out of character, as well as unseemly, for them to defend their literary virtue in public for fear of sullyng their own, their family’s or their genre’s reputation. The *Saturday*’s proposition of the virtual obsolescence of the genre of didactic and semi-religious fiction therefore remained completely unchallenged.

Was the reviewer speaking for *all* readers with literary taste? Implicit in the statement was a presumption that the *Saturday*’s educated audience would agree and that a report on the early demise of the genre would become a mercifully quick and self-fulfilling prophesy. Was the critic alone, or was he reflecting popular opinion? Could readers look forward to a time when all traces of the genre had disappeared from book-sellers’ shelves and circulating library lists. Of course, the author of this critical piece was protected by anonymity from the public’s gaze and censure. Even contributors to the *Saturday Review* admitted that in adopting the *Saturday*’s tone, they could not always

favourably received in America. Giberne, *A Lady of England: The Life and Letters of Charlotte Maria Tucker*, pp. 92-3.

¹²⁴ Charlotte M. Yonge, *The Clever Woman of the Family*, Macmillan & Co, (2 vols.), 1865, p. 6.

identify their own writing, let alone that of others.¹²⁵ However, judging from the strident tone, it seems likely that G.H. Lewes was the author. Over the years, he had been a critic for the *Saturday Review* and other leading periodicals, and his atheistic views and generally disrespectful opinions of established religion, certain women's writing and religious fiction were legendary.¹²⁶

The literati shunned the genre, denied its powers, and regretted its popular appeal. They were, nonetheless, in a minority and the free-thinking Lewes seems to have been engaging in unsuccessful wish-fulfillment. In 1866, over four thousand books were published in London alone.¹²⁷ Eight hundred and fifty were published under the heading of religion, and four hundred, just under half, were published under the category of fiction, and the numbers were growing. To commercial and religious publishers, and to the writers concerned, some of whom drew great comfort from healthy sales figures, it was abundantly clear that this genre within fiction had a growing constituency of readers drawn from less exclusive, but decidedly wider, reading circles.¹²⁸

It is impossible to know how many other writers of religious fiction had read or were even aware of the *Saturday Review*'s prediction of fictional obsolescence. It clearly failed to discourage the literary or philanthropic missions of these writers and others with similar inclinations, as is attested by combined prolific literary outputs of semi-religious novels and journal articles written before and after 1866.

In reality, semi-religious fiction written by women not only survived but flourished. In 1839, George Eliot had condemned religious novels as "monsters we do not know how to class", but by the 1850s even this novelist had changed her attitude towards some forms of religious fiction. She praised Felicia Skene's religious novel, *Use and Abuse*, [1849], as 'a long and wild book' after reading it from cover to

¹²⁵ Leslie Stephen made this admission in relation to his own writing in 1903. Cited by Kent, *Higher Journalism*, loc. cit., p. 192.

¹²⁶ See, for example, Lewes' unsigned article, 'The Condition of Authors in England', Germany and France, *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. XXXV, March 1847, p. 285, in which he belittles 'idle' women writers, and an article written under the pen-name "Vivian", 'A Gentle Hint to Writing Women', which appeared in the *Leader*, 1, 18 Jan, 1850. Lewes had little time for religious fiction which he, as a literary critic, believed to be of inferior quality. See also, G.H. Lewes, 'The Lady Novelists', *Westminster Review*, Vol. LVIII, July 1852, p. 131.

¹²⁷ Bevington cited the *Saturday Review*'s figures for 1866. *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

¹²⁸ For example, F[rederick] W[illiam] Farrar, another writer who specialised in didactic novels of juveniles and adults, recorded his disdain for the *Saturday Review*'s severely critical opinion of his work, *Eric: or, Little by Little* (published in 1858), which appeared in the *Saturday Review*, Vol. VI, 453, Nov. 6, 1858. While the *Saturday Review* criticised, Farrar noted in a letter to a friend that 'thirteen thousand [copies] of the book have already sold'. Reginald Farrar, *The Life of Frederick William Farrar*, New York, 1904, p. 77, cited in Bevington, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

cover.¹²⁹ In part, this change in taste was hastened by the reverberations caused by the Oxford Movement and second-wave Victorian Protestant evangelicalism, and was further accelerated by the fears of social unrest amongst England's underclasses, exacerbated by print journalists and social explorers writing in various ways about the "Dangerous Classes".

Oddly enough, these tensions enabled women like Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker to contemplate the possibilities of leading independent literary and philanthropic lives. Carried on the wave of popular publishing from the early 1860s through to the late 1880s, their books enjoyed a lengthy hey-day. Illustrated tales for young children, pathetic 'Street Waif' tales for juveniles and young adults, three-volume novels of religious faith and doubt for adults, ensured that at its zenith, the genre provided variety of quality, themes and 'inspirational' reading to serve the needs of a wide cross-section of the literate and new-literate community. Far from disappearing into obsolescence, semi-religious didactic novels, classified as 'a kind of religious light reading',¹³⁰ were added to the lists of 'secular' fiction in publishing directories, circulating libraries and later, in elementary schools.

A Measure of Success - The Publishers' Circular

One way for Victorian authors to measure the success of their books was by reading the perspicacious editorial comments in *The Publishers' Circular*. *The Publishers' Circular* was the foremost Victorian journal of publishing intelligence and a useful barometer of demand and public taste.¹³¹ The journal announced new and re-issued publications each week and gave a short report on the state of publishing and writing. At year's end, a table of publications was produced. *The Publishers' Circular* split publications into fourteen 'branches of literature' and justified classifications on the basis of publishing experience.¹³² They attempted to chronicle every book that entered the Stationers' Hall, warning, however, that 'our lists can only pretend to be

¹²⁹ George Eliot to Mr & Mrs Charles Bray, Geneva, 20 September 1849, G.S. Haight (ed.), *The George Eliot Letters*, Vol. I, 1836-1851, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1978, p. 309, and George Eliot to Mrs Henry Houghton, Geneva, 4 October, 1849. G.S. Haight (ed.), *The George Eliot Letters*, Vol. VIII, 1840-1870, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1978, p. 19.

¹³⁰ Patrick Scott, 'The Business of Belief: The Emergence of 'Religious' Publishing', D. Baker, (ed.), *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World*, Oxford, 1973, p. 223.

¹³¹ Simon Eliot and John Sutherland have written a useful Introduction to the Guide to the Microfiche Edition, *The Publishers' Circular 1837-1900*, Chadwyck-Healy, London, 1988, pp. 5-8.

¹³² A sample of *The Publishers' Circular* for 1870, with the Annual Report and graphs indicating publications in each branch of literature are shown in Appendix.

approximately perfect ... absolute completeness ... is impossible, either for us or the British Museum authorities'.¹³³ Juvenile Works and Tales were combined, as was Political and Social Economy, Novels, Tales and Other Fiction, Trade and Commerce, and History and Biography. Significantly, Theology and Sermons headed the list.

Edward Marston, general manager of the *Publishers' Circular*, explained their policy thus:

The decision as to class is of an arbitrary character: as to what amounts to a work of fiction, novel etc., for what remains as a juvenile work; what is really educational, or a work of interest; what is an illustrated work; and what is scientific, year books, belles lettres, essays.¹³⁴

Literary segregation was a fortuitous outcome in many ways. The decision to segregate semi-religious fiction from purely religious and theological publishing was providential for these writers, particularly in a society which took religion so seriously. As women were denied access to the pulpit and other public spaces, the secularised religious fiction which they wrote allowed them an authentic, respectable and authorized literary space in which to express their own religious ideas. Through their writing, they were effectively allowed to preach to bigger congregations than could ever be captured in church or chapel.

The Publishers' Circular and *The Bookseller*, the two major publishing-trade papers which practised this form of literary classification, placed theological works, sermons and biblical criticism and treatises into a strictly defined "Theological" category.¹³⁵ This covered contemporary sermons, essays and academic religious debate, monographs and treatises, almost all of which were written by men, both lay and clergy.¹³⁶ The result of the *Publishers' Circular* classification was an informal means of gender segregation. Significantly, by the early 1870s, the statistician began to notice a marked decrease in the number of theological and biblical publications which had always been at the top of their lists, and a marked increase in fictional publications.

¹³³ *The Publishers' Circular*, Vol. XL, No. 967, Dec. 31, 1877, p. 1174.

¹³⁴ *The Publishers' Circular*, No. 943, Dec. 30, 1876, p. 1224.

¹³⁵ *The Bookseller* was established in 1858 by Joseph Whittaker as a rival authority.

¹³⁶ For an example of the strength of religious debate and religious publishing in this era, see the reprint of Rev. John Hunt, D.D., *Religious Thought in England in the Nineteenth Century*, Gibbings & Co, London, 1896, published by Gregg International Publishers, Hants, U.K. 1971. The most important orthodox and controversial doctrinal debates of the 19th century are reprinted in full. The authors were almost exclusively male, the exceptions in this publication are Hannah More, Sarah Hennell, Frances Power Cobbe and Harriet Martineau.

Tables 1 and 2 below, show crude percentage trends in publishing for two categories, Theology and Sermons, and Novels and Fiction over a twenty year period, from 1870 to 1890. All fourteen branches of literature are contained in the Appendix.¹³⁷

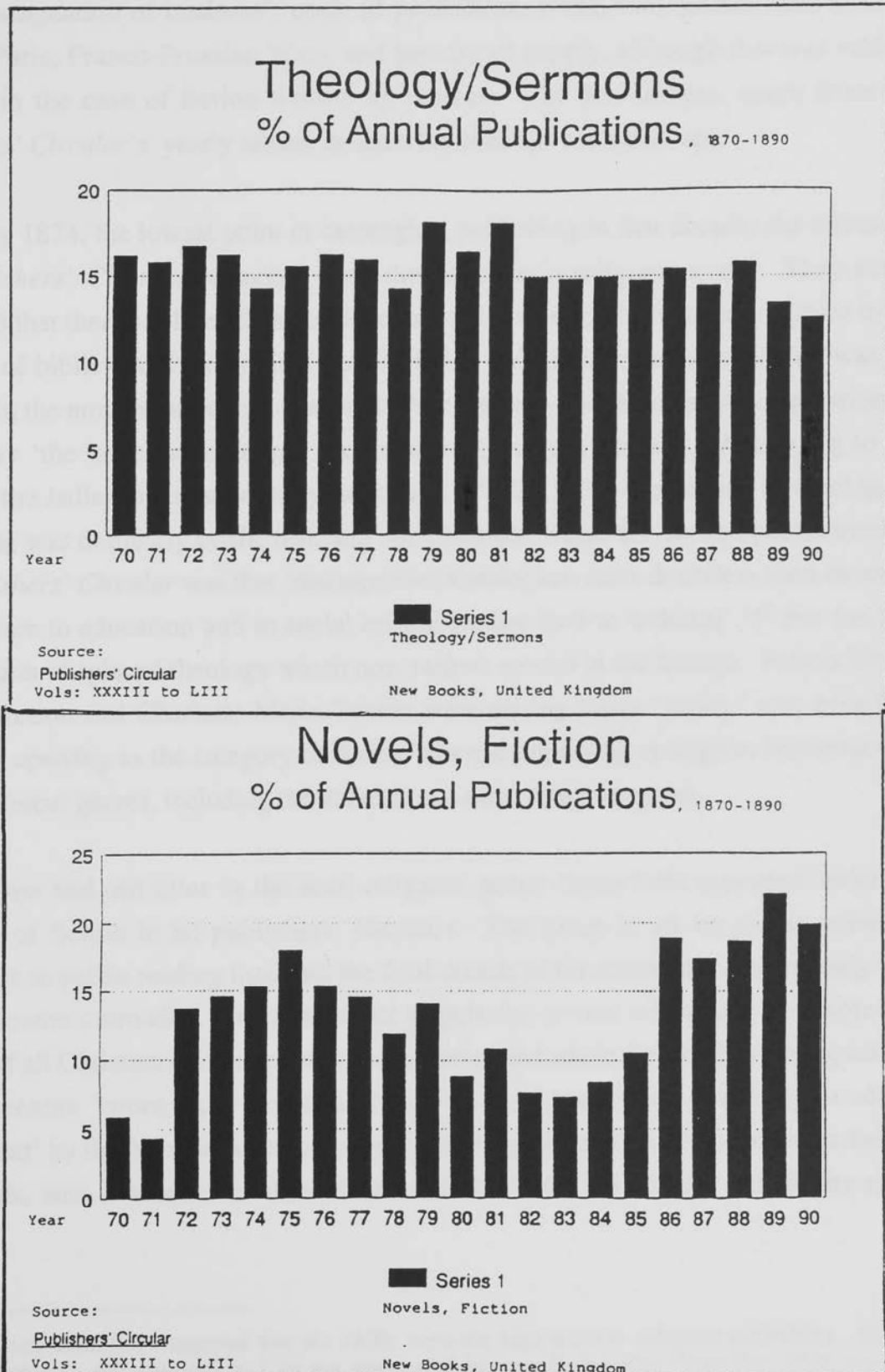


Table 1: Theology and Sermons — Table 2: Novels and Fiction

¹³⁷ All fourteen branches of literature are shown in relation to annual books published in *graphs* contained in the Appendix of this thesis. Source: *The Publishers' Circular*, Vol. XXXIII to LIII, 1870-90.

Theological publishing remained remarkably steady until the final decade of the nineteenth century; fiction, on the other hand, peaked and troughed.¹³⁸ The *Publishers' Circular*, 'a metronome for the trade', linked this to a number of factors including trade slumps, 'stagnation of business', costs of production, taxes, Continental wars (i.e. the siege of Paris, Franco-Prussian War), and paucity of supply, although this was seldom the case in the case of fiction written by women. The percentages, taken from the *Publishers' Circular's* yearly tables, indicate the overlaps and catch-ups.

By 1874, the lowest point in theological publishing in that decade, the editors of the *Publishers' Circular* remarked upon the decrease in religious works. They wryly suggested that there could be those in the community who might 'wickedly rejoice in the decrease of biblical and theological publications'. What was noticed however, was the increase in the number of novels, tales and other fiction— 'works of mere imagination'— written by 'the ladies who supply the greater part of our novels'. According to the editors, 'the ladies are abundantly productive'.¹³⁹ By 1876, the decline in theological publishing was definitely confirmed, and one plausible reason for decline put forward by the *Publishers' Circular* was that 'distinguished theologians have doubtless been devoting their leisure to education and to social reform [rather than to writing]'.¹⁴⁰ For the first time, fiction displaced theology which now ranked second in the listings. Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker were among many "ladies" who benefited from this upswing as the category of fiction was encompassing enough to accommodate many different genres, including the didactic and semi-religious genre.

New and old titles in the semi-religious genre thenceforth appeared under the category of fiction in all publishers' circulars. The genre in all its guises remained prominent on public reading lists until the final decade of the nineteenth century; only then did it become outmoded. In its years of popularity, it was constantly re-adapted by writers of all Christian denominations for juveniles and adults but, as Bratton argues, the genre became 'worn and threadbare with use ... [and was] gradually rendered transparent' by the overuse of stereotypes, sentimental plots and old-fashioned pathos.¹⁴¹ Overwork, was, it seems, the natural cause of death for the writers and for the genre itself.

138 Patrick Scott has suggested that the 1850s were the high point in religious publishing. While I agree with this suggestion, I do not agree with his conclusion that 'from the 1860s onwards, religious publishing ... formed a shrinking proportion of the year's publications, while the literature of idleness ... continued to grow'. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 214. The percentage tables from *The Publishers' Circular* data indicate a steady publication rate until the end of the nineteenth century.

139 *Publishers' Circular*, No. 895, Dec. 31, 1874, p. 1166.

140 *Publishers' Circular*, No. 943, Dec. 30, 1876, p. 1222.

141 Bratton, *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction*, p. 208.

The report of the genre's imminent death in the *Saturday Review*'s announcement in April 1866 was, however, greatly exaggerated, as the succeeding months of that particular year were to prove. It remains to explain why the *Saturday Review*'s critical prophecy was contradicted.

Living Successfully by the Pen

Dinah Mulock Craik, a well-respected novelist who lived by the pen herself, noted that the 1850s was the decade when the novel became the dominant literary form. According to Craik, it was the first time that 'a competent novelist could expect to earn intelligent respect as well as a decent living'.¹⁴² The polite yet pejorative Victorian euphemism, "living by the pen", did not necessarily apply to Felicia Skene and Charlotte Tucker as gentlewomen with small private incomes, but Hesba Stretton, without independent means, relied exclusively upon her pen to support herself and members of her family. For these women, however, "living by the pen" took on quite another meaning. Skene, Stretton and Tucker *needed* to write to express their religious ideas—it was profoundly important to express religious alternatives to secular politics—and having achieved a measure of success in their literary fields, each used portions of earned income to support favoured charities.¹⁴³ Publishers were frequently reminded of this charitable *causa vera*.

Writing *gratis* for the sake of charity might have appealed to conservatives like the writer, Mrs. Sarah Ellis. She suggested that although ladies might do 'almost anything from the motives of charity or zeal', once payment was involved, then even the most charitable of writers were 'transformed into tradeswomen'.¹⁴⁴ Skene, Stretton and Tucker were thoroughly liberated from such old-fashioned notions; payments represented a means to justify philanthropic ends. Others were as reactionary as Mrs Ellis but for different reasons. "Lady authoresses", according to the publisher, John Murray, were too often women 'who hoped to make a little [money] more easily from the pen than by

¹⁴² Sally Mitchell, Introduction, *Dinah Mulock Craik*, Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1983, p. 117.

¹⁴³ This practice was not uncommon; many in the middle classes voluntarily gave a fixed percentage of yearly income to charities, some up to 12% annually. See G.F.A Best, *Mid-Victorian Society 1851-75*, Fontana (Paperback edition), London, 1985, pp. 152ff. See also, F.K. Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: philanthropy in Modern Britain*, Faber, London, 1988 and his earlier work, *Women and Philanthropy*, *op. cit.*,

¹⁴⁴ Sarah Ellis, *Education of the Heart: woman's best work*, London, 1869, p. 14, cited in Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p. 6.

the needle'.¹⁴⁵ The Murrays, by tradition, had never had much use for those they dubbed "Foreign-pens" and "Lady-pens".¹⁴⁶

As a proud Scot of independent means, Felicia Skene hardly fell into either category, however, in 1846, she failed to impress John Murray with her prose or impeccable family credentials.¹⁴⁷ She sent him her manuscript of a meandering travelogue, *Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greeks and Turks, and on the Danube, by a Seven Years' Resident in Greece*,¹⁴⁸ and outlined details in her letter to the publisher:

Sir,

I am induced to encroach a few moments of your time in pursuance of advice given to me by Mr. Robert Chambers, Publisher, in the note enclosed for your persual. I have resided for the last seven years in Greece with my father Mr. Skene of Rubislaw whose name may not be unknown to you and in the months of May and June last returned home by a route as yet little known.

Proceeding from Athens to Smyrna and Constantinople and thence across the Black Sea to Varma at the mouth of the Danube; from this point continuing by steamer on that river the whole way to Vienna, with ample time during this tedious process to explore the shores of Moldavia, Bulgaria and Hungary and finally reaching this country by Salzburg and Munich. During the whole of this journey as well as at other period of my stay in Greece when I made excursions through that country and in the Archipelago, I kept a journal ...

I have been strongly recommended not to break it [the manuscript] up and to offer it to you as a separate [*sic*] publication. ...¹⁴⁹

This gushing solicitation mentioned Robert Chambers,¹⁵⁰ the respected philanthropic Edinburgh publisher and, as a prompt, Felicia enclosed extracts of articles which she said 'had been made use of' by Chambers. She suggested that the entire work was suitable for inclusion in Murray's popular *Home and Colonial* series of travelogues and claimed that her journal contained 'interesting information on places rarely visited which my knowledge of the language and connection in various ways with the East, gave

¹⁴⁵ John Murray, c.1867, cited in Paston, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁴⁷ Felicia Skene's father, James Skene of Rubislaw, was already known to John Murray through their mutual connection with Sir Walter Scott. As we know, Murray and Skene were part of an erudite Edinburgh circle of writers, antiquarians and publishers. In Oxford, James Skene remained part of literary society. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XVIII, Oxford University Press, 1917, p. 336.

¹⁴⁸ *Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greeks and Turks, and on the Danube. By a Seven Years' Resident in Greece*, [F.M.F. Skene], Chapman & Hall, London, 1847.

¹⁴⁹ A.L.S. Feb. 1, 1846. Felicia Skene to John Murray, *Murray Archives*, London.

¹⁵⁰ See a brief and useful biographical sketch of William & Robert Chambers by Lowell T. Frye in *British Literary Publishing Houses 1820-1880*, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-91.

me unusual opportunities of obtaining'.¹⁵¹ Untempted, Murray declined Felicia's offer, despite a further prompt which she addressed to him in May, 1846.¹⁵²

Extracts from *Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greeks and Turks*, appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* in a series of anonymous articles published between January and July 1847.¹⁵³ Felicia Skene had travelled to Ireland in mid-1846 to visit her elder sister, Catherine, wife of John Foster Grierson, Queen's Printer for Ireland. Grierson introduced his unmarried, literary sister-in-law to John Waller, editor of the *Dublin University Magazine*. This was an important contact for Felicia who later provided the journal with appetite-whetting abridgements of her book, prior to its publication in full by Chapman and Hall in July 1847.

An extensive and highly flattering précis and review of the work, together with the reviewer's constant references to the "authoress", indicated that reviewer was acquainted with the author. A fullsome, twelve-paged discussion of *Wayfaring Sketches* appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* in August 1847. The reviewer noted that the author, 'A Seven Year's Resident in Greece' had provided tolerant and fresh perspectives of reforming Greek society and added that the writer:

laboured from the first to disabuse her mind of vague and pre-conceived impressions, and has investigated in a liberal spirit the institutions, manners, and creed of a country where she was so long a resident; and as she has arrived at some conclusions in a measure subversive of popular notions ...¹⁵⁴

Apart from the travelogue's factual qualities, the critic was delighted by the writer's style which had a 'Dickens quality of grouping fellow-passengers into the grotesque, and ... dramatizing adventures into comedy'.¹⁵⁵ The travel genre was extremely popular and accounts of journeys abroad written by 'ladies' were generally

¹⁵¹ Skene to Murray, A.L.S., *op. cit.*, Chambers's accompanying note to Miss Skene's letter together with her journal and original extracts has been lost, and in what form Chambers used her script is unknown.

¹⁵² A.L.S. May[?], 1846, Felicia Skene to John Murray. With this letter, Felicia enclosed the journal which she had, in the meantime, translated from the French in which she had originally written. *Murray Archives*, London. She wrote: 'So long a period has elapsed [two or three months] since I had the pleasure of receiving your last communication that I doubt not amongst your many important occupations it has altogether slipped your memory.'

¹⁵³ *Dublin University Magazine*, Nos. CLXIX to CLXXV, Vols. XXIX to XXX, Jan-July, 1847. Full details are given in Felicia Skene's bibliography.

¹⁵⁴ Unsigned, 'Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greeks and Turks', *Dublin University Magazine*, No. CLXXVI, August 1847, Vol. XXX, p. 247.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*,

well received, even by critics who usually eschewed 'ladies' fiction.¹⁵⁶ A preliminary notice taken from a journal, the *Britannia*, was used by Chapman and Hall in the *Publishers' Circular* to 'puff' the travelogue.¹⁵⁷ The *Britannia* noted that the work was written by 'a Lady' who gave 'lively and pleasing ideas of the countries she visited' and claimed that the work 'displayed the vivacity and grace of the female mind'.¹⁵⁸ In this instance, having a woman's voice was regarded as no impediment. *Wayfaring Sketches*, 343 pages long, cloth-bound, at a cost of nine shillings, succeeded and went effortlessly to two editions.¹⁵⁹

Felicia Skene's literary effort was a success despite the fact that it was filled with moral injunctions and made comparisons—Greek against Turk, Moslem against Christian, Judeo-Christian anglicised law against Eastern tyranny. Skene used elements of the travelogue to extol the virtues of Christianity. Skene's faithful biographer agreed: 'If "*Wayfaring Sketches*" had been purely narrative, we might say that there is not a dull page in it. Unfortunately, there are too many *moral* reflections in it and when she [Skene] abandons her brisk, lively style, she becomes quite Johnsonian in her grandiloquence'.¹⁶⁰ Effusive praise in this instance for the 'female mind', and the author's distinctive style, stands in stark relief to the criticisms made of Skene's *Hidden Depths*. Indeed, the contrast in critical reception recalls not only how literary genres were classified by critics, but also how genres were effectively 'sexed' by content and style.

In rediscovering Felicia Skene's output as a writer-journalist, over forty lengthy individual articles in popular and widely-read periodicals have been identified, and a series of twenty shorter articles Felicia wrote on aspects of the care and punishment of prisoners and prison administration which she wrote for *The Hospital*, an institutional journal. Felicia Skene wrote upon such varied topics as the ethics of tramps, philanthropy, suicide, ghosts, loss of religious faith, capital punishment, brigandage in Greece, prison visiting, penitentiaries, Greek courtships and the treatment of prisoners in Modern Greece. Two absorbing articles which she wrote for *Blackwood's Magazine*, entitled 'Glimpses of Some Vanished Celebrities' and 'Some Episodes in a Long

¹⁵⁶ See Robson, *op. cit.*, and also 'Travel Writing' in *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English*, Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, Isobel Grundy, (eds.), B.T. Batsford, London, 1990, pp. 1090-1.

¹⁵⁷ The *Britannia* (and *Conservative Journal*). No details about this periodical are available. The journal merged with *John Bull* in 1856.

¹⁵⁸ Advertisement, *The Publishers' Circular*, No. 237, Vol. X, 2 Aug. 1847, p. 267.

¹⁵⁹ Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Life',¹⁶¹ touch upon incidents in her own life and have been used in this study to illuminate aspects of her life.

Felicia Skene edited and also wrote a number of articles for the *Churchman's Companion*; most of these were unsigned and have proved difficult to identify with absolute certainty, but articles written upon women are to be attributed to the Editor herself. One piece of serial fiction, 'Light Out of Darkness' was written by Felicia, (confirmed by her biographer), and in this she refashioned her father as the ageing hero, 'General Wyntoun' and she as his dutiful granddaughter, Elsie. Wyntoun's death was Felicia's close recollection of her own father's last days and death which she had witnessed.¹⁶²

Skene's articles are unashamedly conservative: on women's dress, 'Those who are engaged in active work amongst CHRIST'S poor, such as Sisters of Mercy, a sober, unornamental dress is imperatively required'; on 'Sunday Schools: Their Use and Abuse' (note Felicia's reuse of her fictional title)—'Let the hours be short; the room airy; the teachers up to their work, and really fond of children'; on 'Woman's Work', a defence of 'old-fashioned' philanthropic virtues—'the wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters of the period are not the worse for being inexact copies of their great-grandmothers'. The list continues: 'Women's Work in the Church', 'Women's Opportunities', 'Women and Their Rights', 'Women's Rights and Individual Influence'.¹⁶³ Her opinions are often 'High', nonetheless, they deserve attention if only to further clarify her position; other articles judged purely in terms of literary quality merit less attention. Contemporary editors, however, thought Skene's articles interesting enough to set before the reading public. In addition to regularly offering manuscripts, Felicia was commissioned to write for popular journals such as *Blackwoods Magazine*, the *Quiver* and the *Argosy*.

Hesba Stretton also wrote extensively for a number of the most popular periodicals of the day, but she was less versatile than Felicia Skene who was also engaged by publishers and others to translate works.¹⁶⁴ Unlike Felicia who continued

¹⁶¹ *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1895 and 1896. See Skene's Bibliography for full details.

¹⁶² Rickards, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-186.

¹⁶³ This small selection is taken from volumes of the *Churchman's Companion* between 1870 to 1880 in order: Vol. 8, July-Dec. 1873, p. 393, Vol. 2, July-Dec. 1870, p. 309, Vol. 16, 1877, p. 299, Vol. 21, 1880, p. 255, Vol. 18, July-Dec. 1878, p. 276. Vol. 6, July-Dec. 1872, p. 175, Vol. 14, July-Dec. 1876, p. 274.

¹⁶⁴ Felicia Skene translated Honoré de Balzac's novel, *Eugenie Grandet*, into English in 1879, for Richard Bentley & Son. See, *Index and Guide to the list of publications of Richard Bentley & Son 1829-1898*, Michael L. Turner, Chadwyck-Healy, Teaneck, 1975. See also, *Index to the archives of Richard Bentley & Son 1829-1898*, compiled by Alison Ingram, Chadwyck-Healy, Cambridge, 1977. She also 'overlooked, edited and saw through the press, a mass of papers left by Canon Jenkins of Jesus College' which resulted in a book on the subject of the *History of the*

writing for journals until the end of her life, Hesba stopped writing short articles and concentrated her efforts on producing serial fiction which translated readily into inexpensive bound books. Her last journal piece, 'The Half Brothers', appeared in the *Sunday Magazine* in 1892.¹⁶⁵ As we know, Hesba Stretton's early articles included a series of semi-autobiographical glimpses of her life and work in the Post Office, the reformation of juvenile offenders, temperance, work schemes for the unemployed, charity and philanthropy, the rituals of courtship and walking in Shropshire and Normandy. Later she tackled the issues of the rescue of children from parental abuse, Dr. Barnardo, emigration, free library schemes, and the Russian famine and persecution of peasants. Though best remembered for her fiction, her first forays into the literary scene were made through journalism.¹⁶⁶

Hesba Stretton's 'schooling' and success was achieved in the popular periodicals, *All the Year Round* and *Household Words*, and Charles Dickens gave her the initial 'lucky break'. By 1859, she had decided to embark upon her literary career and in December of that year she achieved the distinction of having her amusing if slightly macabre tale, 'The Lucky Leg', published in *All The Year Round*. Hesba Stretton became a regular writer for Dickens who asked her to contribute articles to the usual monthly editions of *All The Year Round*. She was among a group of hand-picked writers chosen by Dickens to contribute to the famous Christmas numbers which were always enormously popular. This, she always regarded as a singular honour.¹⁶⁷

Charlotte Maria Tucker chose a more uncertain route to publication. Her first literary success had arrived in the form of a children's book, *The Claremont Tales*, in 1852. Her earliest contributions to periodical literature were published by the Religious Tract Society in their popular journal, the *Leisure Hour*. Her short tale for young adults, *A Wreath of Smoke*, appeared there first in January 1858 in instalments for which,

Cambridge, 1977. She also 'overlooked, edited and saw through the press, a mass of papers left by Canon Jenkins of Jesus College' which resulted in a book on the subject of the *History of the Church from the Ascension to the Second Council of Nice*, together with another volume which appeared under the title *Passages in Church History*. This work was performed for Lord Bute who was a friend of hers in Oxford. Lord Bute, the third Marquis, had converted to Rome. She also translated the Greek Litany for him in return for which he presented her with a beautifully bound and illustrated copy which she kept beside her until her death. Rickards, *op. cit.*, pp. 280-282.

165 It will be recalled that Hesba Stretton negotiated a copyright for *The Half Brothers* with the American branch of Cassell & Co., New York.

166 J.S. Bratton 'Hesba Stretton's Journalism', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, XII, 2, 1979, pp. 60-70.

167 Hesba Stretton was asked to contribute to six of Dickens's "Christmas Numbers" of *All The Year Round*. The number for 1864, *Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy*, in which Hesba Stretton's tale, 'Another Past Lodger Relates Certain Passages to her Husband', sold over 220,000 copies. Sullivan, *British Literary Magazines*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

according to the Society's records, she was paid the comparatively generous sum of twenty four pounds.¹⁶⁸ Charlotte Maria Tucker's other contributions to periodical literature were published in the Religious Tract Society's magazine *Sunday At Home* in which two of her religious novels appeared, one entitled 'Daybreak in Britain' and the other, 'Mahala'.¹⁶⁹

From 1876, her work appeared regularly in Thomas Nelson's popular family journal, the *Family Treasury of Sunday Reading*, and she also contributed to the *Christian Juvenile Instructor*, a journal which she also edited for a time. Many years later, when undertaking missionary work in India, she wrote items for a number of missionary journals, including the *Church Missionary Gleaner* and the *Indian Female Evangelist* in which her most interesting pieces of journalism appeared. Written for a specific church audience, A.L.O.E. recorded her first impressions of missionary life in a lively style, much freer than the one she adopted for her novels and tales. Despite such indications of talent, Charlotte Maria Tucker was never known for her contribution to journalism—fiction was her forte.

Winning Titles - Books Which Made Names

It is worth considering what these writers regarded as success, both publicly and privately, and why they undertook the type of writing they did. Earning an adequate income from writing was clearly an essential prerequisite of private success; it paid domestic expenses, permitted donations to various charities and institutions, and allowed for luxuries such as travel. Creating an interest in and debate on specific social problems and moral dilemmas was proof enough of public achievement. Success was also confirmed by becoming a respected name—a "household name"—one which could become a trademark: Skene, Stretton and Tucker each attained these degrees of success.

Hesba Stretton's name became indivisible from her most prominent title, *Jessica's First Prayer*, which became a passport to fame. In every publication which followed, including *Alone in London* and *Little Meg's Children*, best-selling books in their own right, the author was accorded recognition through her earlier successes. In *A Thorny Path*, she was noted as 'Author of "*Jessica's First Prayer*", "*Little Meg's Children*", "*Bede's Charity*", etc.,'. In *Half Brothers*, she was noted as 'Author of "*Cobwebs and Cables*", "*Carola*", "*Jessica's First Prayer*" etc.,'. Under the title of the serial, 'Carola',

168 Religious Tract Society, *Correspondence Book* No. 127, p. 42, 13 Jan. 1858.

169 I have not been able to trace copies of these novels. This information is taken from Cutts, *Ministering Angels*, op. cit., p. 210.

in which Matthias Levi, a Jew, befriends Carola, the 'wild street girl', Hesba Stretton is celebrated as 'Author of "*Jessica's First Prayer*", "*Little Meg's Children*", etc.,'¹⁷⁰ Hesba's name was constantly before the public in reviews and book lists; publishers, philanthropists, librarians, and schoolteachers commended her work—her name was a hallmark for readers.¹⁷¹

Charlotte Maria Tucker was celebrated early as the author of *The Claremont Tales*, *Rambles of a Rat*, *The Giant Killer*, *The Young Pilgrim* and a host of other tales including those written specifically for young adults. Like Hesba Stretton, she was identified by her eye-catching pseudonym and followed the same fashion. In *Idols of the Hearth*, A.L.O.E. is also announced as 'Author of "The Giant Killers", "Pride and his Prisoners", etc.,'. In *The Roby Family, or, Battling with the World*, A.L.O.E. is also 'Author of "Wings and Stings", "The Young Pilgrim", etc.,'. In *The Giant Killer*, A.L.O.E. is 'Author of "Fairy Know-A-Bit", "The Young Pilgrim", "Wings and Stings", etc.,'. Charlotte received a flow of clerical compliments on the steadfast qualities of her writing, particularly for *The Wanderer in Africa*, *The Lake of the Woods*, *Rescued from Egypt* and *Triumph Over Midian*, all published in the 1860s.

The *Publishers' Circular* acknowledged A.L.O.E. then as prolific, dependable and "indefatigable".¹⁷² One of A.L.O.E.'s biggest successes, and one which was recalled later with affection by many readers, was *The Rambles of a Rat*.¹⁷³ This entertaining and instructive narrative centres on the 'rescue' and restitution of two London street waifs. Human society is observed closely by a gang of rats, anthropomorphised into the characters of "Oddity", "Whiskerandos" and "Ratto". Each rat makes pertinent comments upon the contradictions of human existence. Sprinkled with religious homilies, moral reflections and items of useful general and scientific knowledge, *The Rambles of a Rat* still stands up well to scrutiny. At the time, it helped make A.L.O.E.'s unusual name memorable.

Writing under a series of pseudonyms, Felicia Skene probably achieved commensurate fame, especially for her religious treatise, *The Divine Master*. More than

¹⁷⁰ Hesba Stretton wrote a sympathetic portrait of Matthias Levi, an old Jewish man, who ensured that Carola attended school and was brought to know 'her' bible. 'Carola', by Hesba Stretton, *Sunday Magazine*, 1884, Serial, pp. 1, 73, 145, 217, 281, 345, 777.

¹⁷¹ Amy Cruse noted that *Jessica's First Prayer* 'was one of the standard books for children in Dissenting and Evangelical households'. Amy Cruse, *The Victorians and Their Books*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1935, p. 80.

¹⁷² The *Publishers' Circular*, Vol. 701, Dec. 8, 1866, p. 748.

¹⁷³ Eric Quayle notes that A.L.O.E. was a compelling story-teller and that *The Rambles of a Rat* 'found a place in children's affections.' Eric Quayle, *Early Children's Books: A Collector's Guide*, David & Charles, Newton Abbot, U.K. 1983, p. 152.

any other of her works, this gave the writer both an anonymous voice and respectable credentials.¹⁷⁴ When her name appeared in books, it was seen variously as Erskine Moir, Francis Scougal, Oxoniensis, but rarely as F.M.F. Skene. When *Hidden Depths* was republished in 1886, her name still did not appear. The book made extraordinary sales, estimated to have been almost 28,000 copies, with two thousand 'given away to Societies for promoting the Welfare of Young Women' and the text translated in 'several languages'. Although lauded, the author still remained essentially unknown though the title of the book was well recognised.¹⁷⁵ She was nevertheless recalled as a presence in her other works. *The Prisoners of Craigmcaire* was 'Edited by the author of "The Divine Master", "Wayfaring Sketches" etc.,'. *The Shadow of Holy Week* was written 'By the author of "The Divine Master"; *Dewdrops* was 'By the Author of "The Divine Master"'. Only in journal articles did she reveal who she really was—F.M.F. Skene—and her name was then treated with marked respect.

Significantly, the books of Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker were also awarded to others, especially as prizes for Sunday School attendance or as subject prizes.¹⁷⁶ This was a reward of a kind, although there were others more tangible. Hesba Stretton was awarded two gold medals for her writing; she received the American Tract Society's gold medal for her book, *A Night and A Day*, published in 1876, and the George Wood Medal "For Premium Tract on the Glory of Christ".¹⁷⁷ Such highly visible forms of public recognition were positive indications of Hesba's wide readership and, importantly, awards from her peers. Charlotte Maria Tucker's prize arrived when she realised that she had inspired Toru Dutt, a young Indian convert, to write about her Christianity. A.L.O.E had awarded a prize to the best Bengali poem written by an Indian girl on the subject of Jesus Christ and Toru responded.¹⁷⁸ Felicia

¹⁷⁴ It will be recalled that the *Divine Master* had gone to eleven editions by 1885.

¹⁷⁵ Felicia Skene sold her copyright for fifty pounds to W. Shepherd Allen, a resident of New Zealand. Shepherd had read the book in England in 1886 and had been struck by its topic and its 'power'. The publisher first refused to pass on Felicia's name but must have informed her of Shepherd's interest. She wrote to him herself and sold her rights. *Hidden Depths* was republished by Hodder & Stoughton at the time that W.T. Stead's 'Maiden Tribute of Babylon' series in the *Pall Mall Gazette* was creating a storm. Shepherd insisted that 'from a financial point of view, there was practically no profit; as the great object I had in view was to circulate the book as widely as possible, as a means of preventing evil'. Rickards reproduced a letter from Shepherd dated 11 March 1901. *Op. cit.*, p.173-4.

¹⁷⁶ My copy of *The Spanish Cavalier: A Story of Seville* by A.L.O.E, Thomas Nelson & Son, London, 1875, for example, has a dedication to its new owner, Jessie Stevens, which reads as follows: "Reward for Missionary collecting on the 30th of December 1874".

¹⁷⁷ 'Miss Hesba Stretton At Home', *Sunday At Home*, Religious Tract Society, 1893, p. 399.

¹⁷⁸ Toru Dutt wrote in 1876: 'Miss Tucker, better known as A.L.O.E., who has written a great many small tracts (and who some time ago a prize for the best Bengali poem by an Indian girl on the subject of Jesus Christ), is at present at Amritsar. Though I do not know her personally, she must have heard about me ... and seen my book, for she wrote to me a very nice letter a few days

Skene's reward, though different, must have been secretly pleasing. When writing to her publisher, William Blackwood in September 1889 about *A Strange Inheritance*, her novel which had failed to thrive in Britain, she recounted her inadvertent success in America:

A certain Mr. Pilkington who has been travelling all over the colonies and the United States asked me the other day if I was the "Skene" who had written "A Strange Inheritance". Then he told me that the cheap American copy seems to be having a great sale in these parts — he said that he found the book on every book stall and in every home he went to—he was for ever coming across it. I think it is very hard on you and me.¹⁷⁹

Harper's Weekly Magazine had pirated the novel in 1887 and published it in instalments. Harper & Brothers of New York was then 'the biggest single customer for English fiction in the world'.¹⁸⁰ As Felicia noted, it was hard on Blackwood who had sustained a loss on the novel, but it was even harder on the writer who might have put the profits to good philanthropic use.

Not unexpectedly, the writers were rarely consulted about their reasons for writing semi-religious fiction and were certainly *not* asked directly if they had consciously set out to make names for themselves. Hesba Stretton and Felicia Skene were approached delicately but declined to respond or gave evasive answers. Felicia Skene, ever modest, refused to be 'lionised' as she put it, or to write her biography despite being urged to do so by eminent Victorian writer, Andrew Lang.¹⁸¹ Hesba Stretton glossed over her successes and suggested to journalist, Hulda Friederichs, that she had lost count of the number of books she had written. She was very reluctant to discuss her religious motivations in public; only one comment hints at the religious intentions of her writing. Referring to her short novel, *Michael Lorio's Cross*, she remarked that there was no "preaching" in it, but went on to say that 'if it does not profit you more than many sermons I shall be surprised'.¹⁸²

ago and sent me a small book of religious poems of her own. Harihar Das, *The Life and Letters of Toru Dutt*, Oxford University Press, 1921, pp. 192-3.

179 F.M.F. Skene to William Blackwood, Correspondence, Sept. 22, 1889, *Blackwood Archives*, MS 4542, folios 55-56, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

180 *Harper's Weekly* had an annual circulation of almost five million copies in the 1860s, and more towards the end of the century. John Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists and their Publishers*, The Athlone Press, University of London, 1976, p. 71.

181 Rickards recorded that Felicia Skene and Andrew Lang corresponded regularly with one another on historical subjects. They had mutual interests and mutual friends and met when Lang was in Oxford. Having read Skene's articles "Glimpses of some Vanished Celebrities" [July, 1895], and 'Some Episodes in a Long Life' [June 1896], in *Blackwood's Magazine*, Lang urged her to 'give her recollections a more substantial and permanent form'. Rickards, *op. cit.*, pp. 322-3.

182 Hulda Friederichs, who interviewed Hesba Stretton for *The Young Woman* in 1984, noted that 'Miss Hesba Stretton does not care to talk about her work'. Later in the same interview, Miss Stretton told Friederichs curtly that it would not be possible to write an accurate sketch of her

Charlotte Maria Tucker made her religious motives clear in prefatory remarks but, as far as is known, she never discussed her inner life or literary work outside the home. The remarkable absence of allusions to her own writings was noted by Tucker's biographer who referred more than once to Charlotte's 'curious dislike to being questioned' on religious matters. One of Miss Tucker's recorded responses to a question about her years of experience as a writer and missionary produced the tart riposte, 'I am not your Mother Superior; don't appeal to me!'.¹⁸³ Only in correspondence with her publishers, Gall and Inglis and Thomas Nelson, did Charlotte ever confide her desire to evangelise, referring to the necessity for the production of 'cheap copies', or 'pie stories' as she called them. In 1890, Charlotte wrote to Thomas Nelson about her books and remarked that she had heard that "Natives" would only buy books if they were very inexpensive and equated to the cost of a pie. She resolved immediately to write 'one-pie-stories'.¹⁸⁴ Charlotte Tucker's unusual measure of success on the Indian sub-continent stood her in good stead.

Whether or not these writers openly acknowledged the religious purpose of their fiction, the omnipresence of Christianity undoubtedly underpinned the fictional agenda. Depending upon the writer's skill, the Christian message could be implicit or overt, but its presence was regarded as an absolute necessity by publishers and readers. The Religious Tract Society, for example, in 1865, stressed the importance of the religious message and talked of introducing 'more decidedly evangelical matter in some works of fiction'.¹⁸⁵ The Editorial Committee praised one of Hesba Stretton's works, *The Children of Cloverly*, because 'the special object [of the book] is to enforce submission to God in all His ways and doing His will from Christian principles'. They thought the work not only 'attractively and graphically written', but also 'thoroughly evangelical'.¹⁸⁶ Hesba Stretton had perfected the blend of literary and religious qualities that religious publishers required. Yet, even she could occasionally transgress. The manuscript of *David Lloyd's Last Will*, was returned to her for correction when the editors, always on the lookout for irreligion, accused her of 'caricaturing religion' in her depiction of a

character since the journalist had not known her for long enough'. *The Young Woman*, No. 22, July 1894, pp. 327-333, *passim*.

183 Giberne, *op. cit.*, p.435.

184 *Ibid.*, p. 454.

185 *Minutes of the Joint Sub-Committee*, Religious Tract Society, Entry 463, Feb. 15, 1865. Microfiche Collection, H. 8502, School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

186 *Copyright Sub-Committee*, Entry 7, Oct. 3, 1865, *ibid.*,

clergyman. She made the corrections before the serial's appearance in the *Leisure Hour*, but noted pointedly in her log book that she was 'truly vexed' at their opinion.¹⁸⁷

Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker considered in private that they drew their inspiration from a higher spiritual source and were directed in their actions. The Anti-Contagious Diseases Act crusader, Josephine Butler, similarly claimed that her specific task had been ordained by God and, speaking for the rest of her sex, she proclaimed that women were 'stewards of the manifold gifts of God' and thus 'expected to dispense those [womanly] gifts to others'.¹⁸⁸ At the same time, the investigations carried out by these writers in the performance of their philanthropic duties provided expert secular knowledge which could not be readily denied, (except perhaps by the *Saturday Review*). Ultimately, 'inside' knowledge provided these writers with a special authority to speak.

Yet the writers' reticence to discuss their private religious motives induced many critics to speculate upon the reasons why women were attracted to write and read religious fiction. Some thought it the result of domestic *ennui* or lack of artistic talent; others simply blamed 'idleness'. Literary critics, ancient and modern, have alternatively suggested that much of this fiction promoted religious propaganda for unholy and primarily commercial reasons. Gillian Avery, whose scholarship in the field of children's literature is indisputable, seriously questions the motives of a variety of named and unnamed evangelical writers.¹⁸⁹

While she commends Hesba Stretton as a 'gifted writer with first-hand experience of the conditions she so graphically described', and proclaims that as a writer she 'genuinely burned to bring the gospel message to readers',¹⁹⁰ she accuses Stretton elsewhere of 'a desire to satisfy publishers and librarians'.¹⁹¹ Others, it seems, were even less "genuine". 'One is driven to believe', wrote Avery, 'that in some cases, writers adopted the evangelical manner from self-interest rather than from conviction'.¹⁹² Finding little to admire in the more didactic works, she singles out Charlotte Maria Tucker's brand of fiction for particular criticism. *The Children's Tabernacle* is thus

187 Hesba Stretton, *Log Book*, Jan. 7 and 11, 1869.

188 Josephine E. Butler, (ed.) *Women's Work and Women's Culture: A Series of Essays*, London, 1869, p. xxxix.

189 Gillian Avery, *Childhood Patterns: A Study of Heroes and Heroines of Children's Fiction, 1770-1950*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1975, p. 97.

190 *Ibid.*, p. 117.

191 Gillian Avery and Angela Bull (eds.), *Nineteenth Century Children: Heroes and Heroines in English Children's Stories, 1780-1900*, Hodder & Stoughton, U.K. 1975, p. 227.

192 Avery, *Childhood Patterns*, p. 97.

represented as a work of 'almost Judaical rigidity' and the implication is that Tucker was not sincere.¹⁹³ From what we have seen of these writers, this attribution of self-interest over deep personal conviction seems unfair. Charlotte Tucker's steadfast religious conviction and energetic devotion to her literary mission flies in the face of Avery's cynicism.

Self-interest, in Avery's terms, implies self-serving satisfaction and if payments are any guide, then fortune never equated precisely with fame, even in Hesba Stretton's case. Of course, these writers were writing for a market; they were not unworldly creatures. They belonged distinctly to the public world and had to be mindful of the commercial considerations of publishing. Writing 'without a purpose' was pointless: it wasted a valuable opportunity to 'preach' and make enough profit to set aside for philanthropic purposes. Writing 'applied literature', as literary historian Paul Turner has described Hesba Stretton's semi-religious fiction, provided these writers with a necessary conduit for philanthropic ideas and the financial means to fund charitable causes.¹⁹⁴ Though willing to donate profits to charitable causes, they were not vapid altruists. Publicly, philanthropy was undoubtedly perceived by many as a 'sacred cause' forming a central part of a distinctive and vital female culture, but Skene, Stretton and Tucker would probably have been prepared to concede that philanthropic actions and accrued experience also enabled them to act. Such informal authority as was conferred on these women provided them with a respected status in Victorian society which was, no doubt, privately enjoyed. Twentieth-century historians may wish to diagnose a personal desire for status or power, but Skene, Stretton and Tucker would have almost certainly denounced these 'lesser' motives as unconscionable.¹⁹⁵ They entered the literary field to specialise principally in writing semi-religious fiction. By taking this step they were simultaneously following tradition *and* breaking new ground.

The years between 1840s and 1860s have been described by Gaye Tuchman as 'the period of invasion', and many Victorian men of letters would have certainly agreed with this description.¹⁹⁶ Although a number of notable male writers contributed to the

¹⁹³ A.L.O.E. *The Children's Tabernacle*, Shaw & Co., 1871 discussed in *ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁹⁴ Paul Turner, *English Literature 1832-1890 Excluding the Novel*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, p. 422.

¹⁹⁵ The power motives of nineteenth-century philanthropic women have been discussed recently by Kathleen McCarthy, who suggests in her introductory essay that 'women have traditionally used these [philanthropic] activities to wield power in societies intent on rendering them powerless'. Kathleen D. McCarthy, (ed.) *Lady Bountifuls Revisited*, p. ix. F.K. Prochaska has also discussed 'status-seeking' via subscription lists, but refines his argument by acknowledging women's 'noble motives'.

¹⁹⁶ Gaye Tuchman with Nina E. Fortin, *Edging Women Out: Victorian Novelists, Publishers and Social Change*, Yale University Press, 1989, p. 7.

genre of semi-religious fiction,¹⁹⁷ women writers appeared to dominate the genre until the end of the century.¹⁹⁸ When Skene, Stretton and Tucker joined the literary scene, it was already becoming crowded and certain professional areas were becoming feminized.¹⁹⁹

But writers cannot survive for long without sympathetic publishers. Understanding the successful and symbiotic working relationships which developed between certain publishers is crucial to an understanding of the working lives of these writers, and is explored in the following chapter.

197 Victorian religious fiction, novels of faith and doubt, and juvenile fiction was written by male contemporaries but have not been considered in this study. See, Robert Lee Wolff, *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England*, Garland Publishing, New York, 1977, Margaret Maison, *Search Your Soul, Eustace: Victorian Religious Novels*, London, 1961, Elisabeth Jay, *The Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, Oxford, 1979. These authors have written on Charles Kingsley, William Sewell, James Adderley, Walter Besant, Frederic Farrar, James Froude, William Gresley, George Sargent, Silas Hocking, George Macdonald, William Hale White and Joseph Shorthouse, all of whom at some point, wrote religious fiction.

198 Tuchman argues that men gradually supplanted women after 1880 once fiction and novel-writing was perceived as potentially profitable and had gained status. This argument is applied particularly to the 'high-culture' novel. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-148. Tuchman's argument does not necessarily apply to religious novelists, as women often accepted lower or no payments for personal, philosophical or charitable reasons.

199 Prominent contemporaries included Elizabeth M. Sewell, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charlotte M. Yonge, Margaret Oliphant, Mrs. O.F. Walton, "Brenda" (Mrs Castle-Smith), Ellen Barlee, Mrs Clara Balfour, Mrs Henry Wood, Sarah Tytler, Anna Maria Hall, Catherine Sinclair, Margaret Gatty, Isabella Linneaus Banks, Elizabeth F.S. Harris, Emma Jane Warboise, Emma Marshall, Alice Meynell, Adeline Sergeant, Jean Ingelow, Mrs Dinah Craick, "Marie Corelli", Amy Le Feuvre, Agnes Giberne, Eglantine Thorne, Mrs. Craigie, Susan Warner, Edith Foster and Lydia Phillips. All these writers, at one time or another, wrote semi-religious fiction for children, juveniles and adults. R.C. Alston has produced an invaluable catalogue of British women writers from the records held in the British Library, R.C. Alston, *A Checklist of Women Writers: 1801-1900*, British Library, London, 1990.

Chapter VI

Good Works and Good Books: 1860s - 1880s

Writers, Publishers, and Philanthropy

I received this day permission from the Commissioners to visit the female prisoners in the County Gaol, Oxford. By the wish of the Governor and the Chaplain it was settled that I was to go there regularly on two days in the week, ... at eleven o'clock, and also that I should be allowed to see the prisoners alone, without the presence of the matron.

I have always regretted that I never kept any record of my visits to the old City Gaol where I had gone at intervals for more than twenty years, and I therefore mean to keep a register of the days on which I go to the County Prison, although I am little likely to have even half the years to carry on the work there that I had in the older prison. Even if my life continues, my strength must fail. [F.M.F. Skene].¹

. . .

That women should work for children is as natural as that the sun should shine or the rain fall. The human race, in its teeming millions, falls generally in to two divisions : men on the one hand, women and children on the other. Where women have their rights, childhood is happy. ...

In all religions, which have attained any wide sphere of influence the idea of the Mother and Child has been presented as a divine one. This idea almost dominates the Christian religion. The memory of the infant Christ has sanctified childhood forever. Henceforth, in all Christian countries, no child can be born without a share in the inheritance of the common childhood of our Lord. [Hesba Stretton].²

. . .

While in England I had heard doubts expressed as to the reality of any conversion in India; in some quarters it has been almost a conventional thing to represent missions in India as a failure, a vain expenditure of money and strength. A view of the congregation assembled in the Mission Church of Umritsar might suffice to remove such an apprehension. White and dark Christians stood up together to repeat the sublime words of the Creed ...

It is certain that there is a spiritual work going on in this city, as well as in some other missionary stations, that prejudices are beginning to melt away, and that India can now number amongst both her sons and daughters, some who show forth the power of Christianity, "not only with their lips, but with their lives". [Charlotte Maria Tucker].³

Good works and good books—a symbiotic relationship—suited the aims of Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton, Charlotte Maria Tucker and their publishers, and provided readers with a choice of books most regarded as 'works of good character'. Evangelicals, and even those outside strict religious circles, seemed more comfortable when assured that what they read was founded on a convincing bedrock of facts.

¹ Felicia Skene, *Prison Diary*, May 1878, Rickards, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

² 'Women's Work for Children' by Miss Hesba Stretton, *Woman's Mission: A Series of Congress Papers on the Philanthropic work of women by eminent writers*, Royal British Commission, Chicago, Sampson, Low, Marston & Co., London, 1893.

³ "An Indian Sketch" Umritsar, Punjab. - From A.L.O.E. *Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol. III, 1877, p. 84.

Hesba Stretton, Felicia Skene and Charlotte Maria Tucker all acknowledged this need for reassurance and assured readers that their work was indeed, built upon such foundations.⁴ Their prefatory notes often included references to specific events: Hesba Stretton, as we know, recorded her witnessing of refugees and child victims of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870-71; Felicia Skene reminded her readers of her work in the condemned cells; Charlotte Maria Tucker reassured parents ^{that} 'my bubbles of fancy have something solid within them—facts are enclosed in my fiction'.⁵ This practice of verifying one's work was not uncommon amongst Victorians; writers such as these reinforced their own credentials and satisfied readers' need to know that this branch of fiction was constructed on more than mere imagination.

Publishers and Philanthropy - Labours in the Vineyard

In 1862, when the cotton famine in Lancashire was at its height, the Religious Tract Society [RTS] issued large grants of tracts 'into the hands of those who were engaged in relieving distress of the operatives'. (Hesba Stretton, it will be recalled, visited Blackburn in that year and wrote for *Temple Bar* on the suffering in that town). In the same year the Society issued 'a special gift of two hundred thousand tracts, in various languages, ... to city missionaries and others for giving to people of many nations who thronged to the great Metropolis for the Exhibition of 1862'. This was the Society's idea of philanthropy—the provision of suitable reading matter for the elevation of the masses. As the Society's memorialist stated: 'In such ways the Committee sought to enforce the various appeals which God in His Providence continually makes to the minds and hearts of men'.⁶

Giving away elevating literature was regarded by philanthropically-inclined publishers as spiritual food for the hungry.⁷ Little wonder that the Society's aim chimed

⁴ Evangelicals have been accused of being particularly suspicious of fiction *per se*, although, as Doreen Rosman has argued, many were not as suspicious nor as censorious as some have suggested. Doreen Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, Croom Helm, U.K, 1984. Mrs. Sherwood, the evangelical writer who trailblazed the juvenile genre continued by Hesba Stretton and A.L.O.E., thought it necessary, however, as early as 1818, to subtitle her tale, *A Drive in the Coach through the Streets of London*, with the words—"A Story Founded on Fact".

⁵ *The Rambles of a Rat*, by A.L.O.E. Thomas Nelson, London, 1857, Preface.

⁶ Samuel G. Green, D.D., *The Story of the Religious Tract Society for One Hundred Years*, The Religious Tract Society, London, 1899, p. 82.

⁷ Gillian Avery notes that Mary Howitt [1799-1888], also responded to the cotton famine by publishing a tale, *The Story of Little Crystal*, in 1863. Importantly, this was published as a philanthropic gesture, 'as a freewill offering from all who are concerned in producing it ... on behalf of their distressed and suffering brethren and sisters of the cotton districts'. Avery suggests that *Little Crystal* anticipated Stretton's *Jessica's First Prayer* in style. Gillian Avery, *Childhood's*

so completely with Hesba Stretton who longed to feed that same hunger. The Religious Tract Society was one of the nineteenth century's most energetic and successful non-denominational publishing societies—its publishing enterprise ensured that 'suitable' reading with 'unobtrusive moral teaching' was available across the globe in hundreds of languages. Aiming to force the 'pernicious press' out of the market, the Society endeavoured to 'drive out the evil by offering the good'.⁸ Samuel Manning, the Society's Book Editor, was Hesba Stretton's unloved cousin by marriage, but through his initial introduction she obtained entrée into this great evangelical publishing and bookselling enterprise.

The *Publishers' Circular*, working on the other side of publishing to promote 'good' and wholesome literature, accepted a substantial amount of advertising from the Religious Tract Society. Every fortnight, a column was devoted to the Society's latest releases and its cluster of periodicals, the *Sunday At Home*, the *Leisure Hour*, the *Cottager and Artisan*. Again, Hesba Stretton featured regularly in these advertisements as one of their foremost writers. The *Publishers' Circular* was 'conducted' by a well-known philanthropist, Sampson Low, (1797-1886), who, amongst many endeavours, helped establish the Bookseller's Provident Institution which cared for the dependants of publishing industry workers, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Life from Fire, the precursor of the municipal Fire Brigade.

Sampson Low, Edward Marston, his entrepreneurial associate and partner who hailed originally from Shropshire, and Sampson Low, junior, began *The Publishers' Circular*—as John Sutherland notes—'as a collective initiative in late 1836 by a caucus of fourteen leading London Houses: Murray, Rivington, Baldwin, Longman, Seeley, Pickering, Tegg, Baldwin, Holdsworth, De Porquet, Nisbet, Ridgway, Whittaker and Tilt'. Edward Marston, its second conductor, was 'a publishing genius' with an enviable bibliographical knowledge and a flair for statistics.⁹ In 1867, Low acquired sole control of the *Publishers' Circular* and his son assisted in the day-to-day operations.

Sampson Low, junior, is perhaps better known as the compiler of *The Charities of London*, which had reached its sixty-first edition by 1899. Low's *Handbook of London Charities*, as it became known, provided an invaluable reference to all the major charitable institutions and societies in operation in the metropolis—'Comprehending the Benevolent, Educational, and Religious Institutions, their Origin and Design, Progress

Pattern: A Study of the heroes and heroines of Children's Fiction, 1770-1950, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1975, p. 118.

⁸ Green, *The Story of the Religious Tract Society*, p. 74.

⁹ John Sutherland, Introduction, *The Publishers' Circular 1837-1900: Guide to the Microfiche Edition*, Simon Eliot & John Sutherland, Chadwyck-Healey, London, 1988, pp. 6-7.

and Present Condition'. The *Handbook* set out the financial positions of London Charities, including all bequests made. In 1861, Low surveyed the number and income of charities in London to discover that there were 640 institutions of which 279 had been founded between 1800 and 1850, and 144 between 1850 and 1860 alone. The annual aggregate income of these charities he estimated to be almost two and a half million pounds, a figure which did not include gifts and subscriptions.¹⁰ In a later publication, he noted that in Queen Victoria's Jubilee year, 1897, 'the total amount bequeathed for charitable, religious, and educational purposes during the past twelve months was about £1,440,000'. Of this munificent sum, an estimated £980,000 found its way into the treasuries of different London charities, including the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Hesba Stretton's favoured charitable society.¹¹

The links between philanthropy and publishing were thus direct and mutually well-informed. Hesba's thoughts on charity at the head of this chapter appeared in *Woman's Mission*, published by Sampson Low, Marston & Company. The epigraph chosen by the publisher to underscore the importance of women's philanthropic work ran: "So womanlie, so benigne, and so meeke", a line taken from Chaucer. When Sampson Low wrote on charity and philanthropy, he was no sentimentalist however, as his article, 'Charity, Noxious and Beneficent' for the *Westminster Review*, revealed. He shared Felicia Skene's views on the need for discriminating charity, and both anticipated the Charity Organisation Society's approach to community benevolence which frowned upon personal almsgiving and "blundering".¹² Low was also particularly perceptive on women's sense of vocation:

They [women] may feel a particular vocation; they may be specially impressed with some one peculiar form of social evil, and may devote themselves to war with it; their line of usefulness may be indicated by them by their capacity rather than by their position; they may master one particular branch of philanthropy, and bind all their powers to its service. [They] are perhaps the most obviously, certainly, speedily, successful of the messengers of mercy.¹³

Though not written with a specific person or persons in mind, this description encapsulates Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker. Each devoted themselves to usefulness, specialised in particular branches of philanthropy and acted as messengers of mercy.

¹⁰ Cited in Kathleen Woodroffe, *From Charity to Social Work in England and the United States*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1962, p. 23, referring to Sampson Low, *The Charities of London in 1861*, [Table for 1862], Preface, pp. vii-xi.

¹¹ 'London Charities', Review of *Low's Handbook to the Charities of London*, in the *Publishers' Circular*, No. 1728, Aug. 12. 1899.

¹² Cf. Skene's articles on 'Penitentiaries' and 'The Blunderer', referred to earlier.

¹³ Sampson Low Jun., 'Charity, Noxious and Beneficent', *Westminster Review*, Vol. 3, 1853, p. 62.

Sampson Low, senior, was by all accounts, a man 'fanatical in his philanthropy'.¹⁴ His son, Sampson Low, junior, took a more objective look at the philanthropic enterprises of the day and his article, a revealing document, reflects the temper of the times. Low, junior, was anxious to analyse what he saw as the discriminate and indiscriminate forms of charity *evident* in the metropolis. He gave shape to the tensions emerging between two faces of Christian benevolence and identified these as 'the lazy shape of charity' and the worthier 'garb of true philanthropy'. His approach was clearly more rational than religious than his father's. He stressed that modern philanthropy was not so much a gift, as an investment in people and the future of the nation. He repeated the litany which called for improved sanitation, decent and comfortable dwellings, and employment. His argument was illustrated by using a 'case-study' approach, indicating that he anticipated both the need to co-ordinate charitable relief and the formation of the Charity Organisation Society.¹⁵ Importantly, the article provides evidence that publishers such as Sampson Low, (both father and son), and others similarly sympathetic to these forceful ideas, provided a receptive conduit for like-minded writers such as Skene, Stretton and Tucker.

All this serves to illustrate the overlooked point that the history of British publishing in the nineteenth century cannot be removed from the impulse to philanthropy. The Religious Tract Society, through the 'generous exertions' of its members, ensured that inexpensive, "cheap" and free literature containing elements of the gospel, was distributed across not only the country but across the entire globe. Their mission was to ensure that 'there remain[ed] not one uninstructed family in the British Empire'. Religious fiction had to fulfil certain criteria: it had to contain 'pure truth', to provide 'some account of the way of a sinner's eventual salvation, and to be plain, striking, entertaining, full of ideas and adaptable to various social situations and conditions'.¹⁶ Stretton's and Tucker's writing in particular, suited the Society's criteria.¹⁷

Well-known publishing houses and societies were founded by men—mainly well-to-do middle class men—who devoted a sizeable portion of their efforts and profits to philanthropic publishing. Here we have seen that Low was one, and it also worth contemplating the combined strengths of the informal publishing network which included

¹⁴ Sutherland, *The Publishers' Circular*, p. 6.

¹⁵ For a short history of social casework and the Charity Organisation Society, see Judith Fido, 'The Charity Organisation Society and Social Casework in London 1869-1900', in A.P. Donajgradzki, (ed.), *Social Control in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Croom Helm, London, 1977, pp. 207-230.

¹⁶ Green, *The Story of the Religious Tract Society*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁷ As John Feather reminds, 'the power of the printed word to effect the moral improvement ... was a fundamental tenet of the nineteenth-century philanthropists'. John Feather, *The History of British Publishing*, Routledge, London & New York, 1988, p. 160.

such famous houses as Cassells, Blackwood's, Murray's, Chambers, Thomas Nelson, John S. Shaw, S.W. Partridge, John Nisbet, Macmillan, Joseph Cundall, R. & S Rivington, Hodder and Stoughton, Kegan Paul and T. Fisher Unwin. In addition to the Religious Tract Society, there were also the committees of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge and the British and Foreign Bible Society, as well as the editors and proprietors of many religious magazines with literary contents which carried appeals from charities and philanthropic institutions.¹⁸ R.C.Morgan, well-known evangelical philanthropist and editor of *The Revival*, was always willing to publicize the operations of any respectable Evangelical Charity,¹⁹ as was Alexander Strahan, editor of the *Contemporary Review*. He published several articles by Reverend Benjamin Waugh on abused children in support of protective legislation and the London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.²⁰ The same names cropped up on charities' membership lists, strengthened by the support of leading banking houses conducted by the Barclay's, Burney's, Bouverie & Co., and Coutts. Sampson Low articulated the publishers' philanthropic mission when noting that Victorians were:

receding fast from the barbarisms of former times, both in practice and legislation. As a community, we are awakening to a far stronger and more general sense of the claims and dues of all classes.²¹

This 'awakening' was stimulated by both the press and by 'messengers of mercy' like Skene, Stretton and Tucker. Low wrote abstractedly about statistics which revealed the 'social wretchedness, ... the want, destitution, and misery which so haunt and shock us in our complicated modern world',²² but these writers fictionalised conditions so graphically that even if readers had never glimpsed one of Hesba Stretton's freezing slum garrets or visited Felicia Skene's penitentiary wards for dying prostitutes, they could readily picture such miserable places in their mind's eye. At the same time,

¹⁸ Josef L. Altholz has compiled a useful list of nineteenth-century religious magazines with literary contents as an Appendix H to Alvin Sullivan's, *British Literary Magazines*. Altholz has identified proprietors and editors with their religious allegiances. Many names shown are also associated with missionary charities. Another useful source identifying religious denomination with individual periodicals is *Sell's World Press and Advertiser's Reference Book*, Henry Sell, London, 1902. The list begins with Anglo-Catholic periodicals and ends with Wesleyan Methodist. The list provides full title, frequency of publication, and price.

¹⁹ Kathleen Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action: An Appraisal of their Social Work*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1962, p. 8.

²⁰ Benjamin Waugh, 'Street Children', *Contemporary Review*, 53, June 1888, pp. 825-835. Henry Edward, Cardinal Manning and Benjamin Waugh, 'The Child of the English Savage', *Contemporary Review*, 49, 1886, pp. 687-700.

²¹ Low, 'Charities, Noxious and Beneficent', p. 62.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 82. Regional Statistical Societies devoted to the collection of facts and figures on the state of the nation, began in earnest in the mid-1850s. The Association for the Promotion of Social Science held its first meeting in Birmingham in 1857; its scope covered jurisprudence, and amendment of the law, education, punishment and reformation, public health and social economy. For a contemporary account of such societies, see 'Social Reform', an article appearing in the *Dublin University Magazine*, No. CCCIX, Vol. LII, Sept. 1858, pp. 288-298.

Hesba Stretton's and Felicia Skene's works of 'applied fiction' on the subject of prison detention, for example, added to a growing corpus of social knowledge.²³ Prisons had been a closed world and not since the 1820s had women been as publicly critical of the penal system. It was of significance that women were now writing authoritatively upon such subjects in fiction and elsewhere.²⁴ Such instructively entertaining reading matter—and it was 'entertaining', purposefully engaging the social and moral imagination—appealed to the middling classes and others with increasing hours of leisure at their disposal. These were the hours that publishers wished to fill with inspirational reading.

"EVERY PERSON SHOULD HAVE A LEISURE HOUR"

W. Haig Miller, editor of the *Leisure Hour, A Family Journal of Instruction and Entertainment*, published by the Religious Tract Society, assumed that the leisured classes had access to improving literature, and he was correct. Publisher's lists and sales figures for 1859, confirmed that by price, one third of religious and juvenile/moral works 'imbued with religious spirit', sold at prices well out of reach of the ordinary working man's purse.²⁵

The Religious Tract Society's editor wanted to 'garner fragments of precious time' to inspire large numbers of respectable workers to join their 'betters' in instructive reading, and provide such reading at a reasonable price. A full-page advertisement in the *Publishers' Circular* proclaimed that *The Leisure Hour* aimed to provide information and entertainment to meet 'the intellectual needs of the people':²⁶

²³ Hesba Stretton, *Facts on a Thread of Fiction: In Prison and Out*, Religious Tract Society, 1880, was a tale set in Manchester and concerned with deleterious effect of imprisonment on first-time juvenile offenders. Francis Scougal, [Felicia Skene], *Scenes from a Silent World*, Blackwood, Edinburgh & London, 1889, dealt with prison sentencing, prison conditions, the death penalty and provided individual case studies of prisoners.

²⁴ In the 1820s, Elizabeth Fry and Sarah Martin were the most well-known female prison visitors, and the British Society of Ladies for Promoting the Reformation of Female Prisoners was formed under Mrs. Fry's guidance in 1821. F.K. Prochaska suggests that there was a decline in the 'activity of women prison visitors in the Victorian years'. Felicia Skene, as we know, commenced visiting the Oxford Gaol in 1854 and continued visiting there and elsewhere until her death. Her book on prisoners and prisons, *Scenes From A Silent World* was preceded only by Mrs Susanna Meredith's, *Saved Rehab! An Autobiography*, published in 1881. Mrs Susanna Meredith was 'a distinguished philanthropist who devoted years to prison visiting and the cause of discharged prisoners'. Mrs Meredith complained that she was unable to speak on the interior of prisons as she was not permitted into prisoners' cells. F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1980, p. 172. Felicia Skene was permitted into the cells at the discretion of various prison governors. After 1878, she was made an official prison visitor. Prochaska has written on the 'relative powerlessness of women prison visitors', *ibid.*, p. 173. Felicia Skene's experience provides an interesting challenge to Prochaska's view.

²⁵ Patrick Scott, 'The Business of Belief: The Emergence of 'Religious' Publishing', *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World*, D. Baker, (ed.), Oxford, 1973, p. 213.

²⁶ *Publishers' Circular*, No. 341, 1857, p. 399.

EVERY PERSON SHOULD HAVE A LEISURE HOUR

Materials ... provided by this agency, presented in such quantities and with such a regard to adaptation and variety, that the short and broken intervals of daily toil may be turned to profit; and the humblest artisan, though denied access to larger stores of knowledge, may treasure up during his lesiure hours, abundant facilities of usefulness and purpose.²⁷

The Leisure Hour also set itself another more democratic task. It wished to 'avoid the pernicious principle of creating a distinct literature for each of the different sections of society—there will be no ostentatious parade in the choice of topics or the mode of treating them'. Significantly, it sold for one penny, a price within reach of the working man's purse. The Religious Tract Society and other publishers, saw golden opportunities to provide enriching yet cheap reading material and, from the 1850s and 1860s onwards swamped the market with a variety of weekly and monthly magazines to which Skene, Stretton and Tucker contributed from time to time. The Society's memorialist noted that the religious publishing house ministered 'to the intellectual improvement and delight of thousands of readers, carrying out its principle of treating all subjects of human interest in the light of Christian truth'.²⁸ Their activities often displayed a vision, foresight and sound business acumen, matched only by their authors.

By 1869, the editor of the *Publishers' Circular*, reviewing the year's crop of printed works, posed the question: 'What can be said to stir the hearts and conscience of men more completely than do such literary manifestations of the religious spirit of our times?' He was referring to theological works but more to religious fiction published in that year, judging it to be 'of vital interest and important in the days in which they are issued'.²⁹ The editor of *Good Words*, Norman Macleod, agreed and broadened the definition of the 'literary manifestations of the religious spirit'. *Good Words*, published by Strahan & Company, proved that literature written in the spirit of real Christianity need not be dull; it could be both entertaining and popular.

Macleod insisted that it was necessary to combine all that was good from 'secular' periodicals with all that was good from 'religious' periodicals, including 'wholesome general literature, genuine science and religious articles'. He claimed this knowledge as editor of a highly successful periodical, *with* ten year's experience behind him: 'the educated and intelligent members of our Church are sick of the feeble, mawkish twaddle

27 Advertisement, *Ibid.*,

28 Green, *The Story of the Religious Tract Society*, p. 73.

29 *Publishers' Circular*, Vol. XXXII, No. 775, Dec. 31, 1869, p. 1010.

which has been too often served up to them under the term 'Religious Periodical'. His readers deserved better and he saw to it that they were given 'real meat'. What was more, he assured readers that his writers—men and women—were not only experts in their fields, but also in harmony with the 'essentials of the Christian faith'.³⁰

Other publishers with philanthropic aspirations and interests either used existing outlets or created new ones to carry their message. During the decades following the 1860s, Reverend Benjamin Waugh, a co-founder with Hesba Stretton of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, edited the *Sunday Magazine* for Isbister & Company. *The Band of Good Hope Review*, a temperance magazine which actively encouraged donations to other charities, was published for many years by S.W. Partridge. *The Young Woman*, a journal for females, carried full page appeals on behalf of the Guild of the Good Samaritan 'to promote Home Work on Behalf of the Poor' and the Ragged School Union. *The Quiver, An Illustrated Magazine for Sunday and General Reading*, published by Cassells, published articles about the Zenana Missionary movement which had attracted the honorary services of Charlotte Maria Tucker; it also exposed religious persecution and prison conditions in Russia, as had Hesba Stretton in her book, *In the Hollow of His Hand*.³¹ In the years between the 1860s and 1880s, *The Quiver* focused attention on the poor of the nation and, like Hesba Stretton, condemned the smugness which denied the existence of poverty or blamed the poor and 'recommend[ed] individual charity unaccompanied by lectures on thrift and duty'—ideas like those expressed by Felicia Skene.³²

Discriminating charity was unpalatable to so-called "sentimentalists",³³ but others, including social commentators and those working in the field such as Felicia Skene, regarded discrimination as an absolute necessity to prevent, among other sins, mendicity and charity-induced indolence. Differentiating between the deserving and

³⁰ George Macleod, Open Letter, 'Good Words', *Publishers' Circular*, Vol. XXXII, No. 774, pp. 992, Dec. 18, 1869.

³¹ 'Among the Prisoners of Siberia', *The Quiver*, Vol. XVII, 1882, pp. 435-439. 'Zenana Life in India', *The Quiver*, Vol. XVII, 1882, pp. 592-596.

³² Missy Dehn Kubitschek, 'The Quiver' in Alvin Sullivan (ed.), *British Literary Magazines: The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913*, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1984, p. 333.

³³ J.S. Mill complained about the 'increase of sympathy for the poor' by those who he claimed were not 'adequately aware of their real condition'. These people, according to Mill, 'usually give alms to gratify their feelings of compassion, or to discharge what they think their duty by giving of the superfluity to alleviate the wants of individual sufferers; and beyond this they do not, nor are they, in general, qualified to look'. Felicia Skene and J.S. Mill shared a dislike for what Mill called the 'new philanthropists ... the great sticklers for the domestic liberty of the poor', although Skene, despite her membership of the Charity Organisation Society, continued to believe in the importance of individual philanthropy. J.S. Mill, 'The Claims of Labour', *Dissertations and Discussions* II (1867), (first appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, LXXXI, April, 1845, pp. 498-525), in J.M. Robson (ed.), *J.S. Mill, Essays on Economics and Society, 1825-1845*, Vol. IV, University of Toronto Press, 1967, pp. 364-389.

undeserving poor had been the onerous task of Poor Law administrators, and by the late 1860s it had also become the duty of the committees of the Charity Organisation Society. Henry Carre Tucker, the influential elder brother of Charlotte Maria Tucker and Guardian of the Marylebone Workhouse, wrote upon the subject in 1869, identifying four 'classes of the poor' — the sick, aged, and infirm; the children; the idle able-bodied and habitual vagrants; and the industrious able-bodied, in temporary distress'. His treatise considered the appropriate ways and means of relieving poverty.³⁴ Particular charities and benevolent societies, however, arranged their own selection methods.

John Kirk, Secretary of the Ragged School Union, wrote to the *Publishers' Circular* in December, 1890, thanking the publishing and allied professions for 'nearly fifty years of practical sympathy'. The publishing industry had both a vested commercial and philanthropic interest in providing books to the Ragged School Union. Directly above his letter was another important announcement. The Booksellers' Provident Institution, founded by Sampson Low, senior, had held its usual monthly meeting at which it distributed the sum of £107-15s.8d. This was donated, 'in temporary and permanent assistance to sixty-one members and widows, supplemented by the usual generous gifts of Mr. W.E. Green, Mr. Joseph Whitaker [owner of the *Bookseller*], and Messrs. Sampson Low & Co., in addition to the extra grant made by the institutions at this season in the year'.³⁵

The announcement is instructive; institutional and individual expressions of philanthropic benevolence were not exclusive to the publishing community, but the philanthropic circle embraced wider circles. In this instance, writers, publishers, printers, illustrators, and booksellers were members of a specialised society but also part of a wider philanthropic culture, contributing and receiving what John Kirk described gratefully as 'Practical sympathy'. Good works and good books spread beyond the publishing and allied professions. In this case, readers in the 'ragged' schoolrooms stood to benefit.

Entrepreneurial and Philanthropic Spirits

In mid-Victorian England, making a profit from this kind of religious publishing was not regarded as a sin. As Brian Harrison notes, there was an 'unabashed union of profit with philanthropy' and many evangelical writers were pleased to join in the

³⁴ Henry Carre Tucker, C.B. Guardian of St. Marylebone, *Thoughts on Poverty and Pauperism*, Printed for Private Circulation by Capt. Charlton Tucker, 1869. [Cat. No. EC 7294P], Kashnor Collection, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

³⁵ *Publishers' Circular*, No. 1279, Dec. 31, 1890, p. 1655.

union.³⁶ If readers extracted knowledge from taking up semi-religious fiction in their leisure hours, and publishers could use the profits 'profitably', then the union was doubly blessed. Samuel Partridge, evangelical publisher of some of England's most popular juvenile magazines of high moral tone, reproduced the creed of probity and integrity in *verse*:

Thy business
Must not be such as will debase th yself.
'Tis a poor bargain that - a fortune be made
By a Soul's ruin. Nor must thy house so trade
That thou will become a mean and cunning knave,
An over-reaching and unconscie'd thing,
Laying thy goods off to thy customers,
And foisting trashing things on ignorance with
well-dissembled candour.³⁷

The entrepreneurial spirit carried over into philanthropic publishing and effectively reconciled God with Mammon. John Feather suggests that education was regarded as the key gift: 'The philanthropic belief in the value of education had been transformed into a public policy, and its success created whole new markets for the publishing industry. The mass market for leisure reading ... was as profitable as that for schoolbooks'.³⁸ The Religious Tract Society, for example, which produced an extraordinarily wide range of "educational" books and periodicals in addition to tracts, retained profits from Hesba Stretton's books which, in turn, were used to finance the Society's mission spreading the gospel through the medium of fiction.

Jessica's First Prayer, is a fine case in point. Appearing first as a serial in the Religious Tract Society's periodical, *Sunday At Home*, Hesba Stretton's work reached the hearts thousands of readers and travelled into the mind of the philanthropic world through leaders such as Lord Shaftesbury. Hesba Stretton had little time for leisure herself and by 1869 had already produced two more best-sellers, *Alone in London* and *Little Meg's Children*, which were enormously profitable for the Religious Tract Society. By then her negotiating skills had improved and were soon to become legendary in Paternoster Row. While never exactly 'cashing-in' on her fame with a view to making a

³⁶ Brian Harrison, 'Press and Pressure Groups in Modern Britain', in Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (eds.), *The Victorian Periodical Press, Samplings and Soundings*, Leicester University Press, University of Toronto Press, 1982, p. 277.

³⁷ S.W. Partridge, *Upward and Onward: A Thought Book for the Threshold of Active Life*, London, 1857, pp. 73-4. For a brief outline of S.W. Partridge and Company, see Peter Stockham, 'S.W. Partridge and Company', *British Literary Publishing Houses, 1820-1880*, Patricia J. Anderson and Jonathon Rose (eds.), *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 106, Gale Research Inc., Detroit, pp. 236-7.

³⁸ Feather, *The History of British Publishing*, p. 168.

personal fortune, Hesba exercised entrepreneurial skills which benefitted her as a writer and the philanthropic aims of the Society.

The Religious Tract Society regarded Hesba Stretton not only as a 'gifted author' but also 'their' writer. In the Society's Minutes for 1869, the sales of her books came in for special mention:

The prominent fact in connexion with the books [for the year] is the large proportion of Hesba Stretton's. Of the whole circulation 568,380, 122,162 are hers, leaving 446,218 for all the rest, and of new books, 83,664, 28,228 were hers, leaving only 55,436 for the other 22 authors.³⁹

In percentage terms, these figures indicate that Hesba Stretton's new books represented almost thirty-four percent or one-third of new book sales in 1868. Of the Society's total annual sales, her publications represented 21.5 %, or over one-fifth of their entire circulation of books. Even by today's standards, these are impressive figures and indicate the strength of the Society's distribution and share of the market. More importantly, they indicate the enormous popularity of Hesba Stretton's works.

Hesba Stretton began her professional career by selling her copyrights outright. Most writers, and especially women who wrote for religious publishing houses, seemed happy to accept this system and many were grateful for a lump sum payment.⁴⁰ Like all publishers, the Religious Tract Society gained substantial profits under this system particularly when a book proved a success. In 1868, having witnessed the extraordinary sales of *Jessica's First Prayer*, both as serial fiction in the *Sunday At Home* throughout 1865, and as a book in 1866, Hesba weighed the potential outcome of her intended actions—including the philanthropic considerations—and decided to improve her own returns. In the year of its release as a novel in 1866, the tale sold 130,000 copies and the figures increased annually. Hesba's commercial decision, while allowing the Society to continue profiting from her writing, made them acknowledge her professional status as a writer and pay for her "name" on their books.

³⁹ Secretary's Report, *Religious Tract Society, Correspondence Book 1868/69*, page 106, Entry 198, July 15, 1869. [Microfiche, H8502], School of African and Oriental Studies, London.

⁴⁰ Cf. Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer*, esp. Chapter 5, 'The Female Drudge: Women Novelists and Their Publishers', pp. 164-203, and Gaye Tuchman with Nina Fortin, *Edging Women Out*, esp. Chapter 7 'Macmillan's Contracts with Novelists', pp. 148-174. Tuchman's chapter is useful and contains the common types of contractual arrangements including commission, subscription, half-profits, and outright sale of copyright. She argues that publishers had economic power over authors 'because the were frequently an author's key source of income and served as his or primary creditor', p. 161. As far as is known, neither Skene, Stretton nor Tucker borrowed cash or received advances from publishers.

While the Society's records are unclear, it seems that Hesba was probably paid between two and five guineas for *Jessica*. The Society amassed all the profits from this best-seller, although precisely how much remains a mystery. From the records it is evident that as time passed, the Committee paid out small honorariums in recognition of the success of her work. Payments arrived in dribs and drabs—five pounds here, ten pounds there—with one final lump payment being made in 1870. The receipt of this sum was recorded. Hesba wrote in her Log Book: 'Went to the Row; Received £375 which we invested at once with great rejoicing'.⁴¹ She received less than five hundred pounds for this tale which, by 1893, had sold three quarters of a million copies. By her death in 1911, more than two and a half million copies had been sold and, of course, this figure does not include pirated copies.

In a Log Book entry for March 10, 1868, Hesba wrote: 'shocked Mr. Stevens [an editor at the Religious Tract Society], by saying I intended to ask Mr. Wills' advice about "Little Meg".⁴² "Little Meg" was the working title of the book she was currently working on which became another best-seller after its release in 1868. Hesba's strategy was to offer her work to the Society and a number of other publishers and play them off against one another. She was not content to sell her copyright — what she wanted and what she ultimately received was a lump sum payment *and* royalties. Hesba eventually netted more than £2000 in royalties for *Little Meg's Children* as it was known. In the process of her negotiations, she alerted not only the Religious Tract Society but also other publishers that she drove a hard bargain. Hesba Stretton knew that the Society still stood to make a fortune from her work which would be put to good use, but she also decided to collect her 'moral' earnings — her reward for labours in the philanthropic vineyard.⁴³

Whether Hesba's insistence upon receiving royalties can be seen as a move for women's rights, or simply for the right of a writer to be adequately rewarded remains open to question. While she was prepared to devote all her literary efforts to God and philanthropic causes, she was not content to leave her financial future to Providence. Certainly, her direct approach to the Religious Tract Society, Houlston & Wright, Charles Wood, Seeley & Jackson, and Nisbet's on the issue of payments can be seen as striking out in the right direction, and these publishers had never confronted the issue face to face with a woman. Other women writers had broached the subject in correspondence, as we

⁴¹ *Log Book*, Jan. 17, 1870.

⁴² Mr Wills [William Henry Wills] was Charles Dickens's co-editor and he had given Hesba good editorial advice in the past.

⁴³ A detailed account of Hesba's negotiations will appear in Suzanne L.G. Rickard, "Living by the Pen": Hesba Stretton's Moral Earnings', forthcoming Jan 1996, *Women's History Review*.

know, but only Hesba marched into publishers' offices with her revolutionary proposal.⁴⁴

Business-like behaviour from a woman shocked the editors of the Religious Tract Society. Had Hesba's readers known, they, too, may have regarded her behaviour as uncharitable, believing in accordance with one view of the philanthropic spirit of the age that the greatest reward for writers such as Hesba Stretton was that of being read by the masses. Hesba's behaviour chimed naturally with the other spirit of the age and her own entrepreneurial instincts. More important, however, was the fact that both she and the publisher made profits and simultaneously spread the essential elements of the gospel. After twelve weeks of intensive negotiations, Hesba received fifty pounds for her assigned copyright for *Little Meg's Children* and six pounds and five shillings for every thousand copies sold. By the end of 1869, 14,000 copies had been sold and by 1878, more than 350,000. The sales continued into the twentieth century.

Unlike Hesba Stretton, the popular novelist, Mrs Henry Wood, 'seldom took up a social subject'. Hesba Stretton's and Mrs Wood's paths had crossed in a number of ways through publishing and through Charles Wood, her son, co-editor and part-owner of *The Argosy*.⁴⁵ If her son's account is to be believed, Mrs Wood willingly wrote for William Ainsworth's periodicals 'with no further reward beyond seeing them [her stories] in print'. Later, she complained that she had written for ten years without adequate remuneration. According to Wood, a friend to both Hesba Stretton and Felicia Skene, it was only after delicate negotiations with Harrison Ainsworth that Mrs Wood received a small yearly sum for her contributions to *Bentley's Miscellany*.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot negotiated with publishers, albeit through male intermediaries. Margaret Oliphant regularly pressed her publishers for payments, as did Mrs. Humphry Ward. Mrs Gatty and Mrs Ewing, mother and daughter editors of *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, advised their publisher George Bell, the prices expected for their writing. Even the retiring Charlotte M. Yonge negotiated precisely by letter with her publisher, John W. Parker. See, Winifred Gêrin, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Biography*, Oxford University Press, p. 295, J.A. V Chapple & Arthur Pollard (eds.), *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, Manchester University Press, 1966, p. 772, Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, Faber & Faber, London & Boston, 1993, G.S. Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography*, Penguin, London, 1985, Elisabeth Jay, (Ed.), *The Autobiography of Margaret Oliphant: The Complete Text*, Oxford University Press, 1990, John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-eminent Edwardian*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990, Christabel Maxwell, *Mrs Gatty & Mrs Ewing*, Constable, London, 1949, David Bonnell Green, 'Two Popular Novelists of the 'Fifties and their Publisher: Letters from G.J. Whyte-Melville and Charlotte M. Yonge to John William Parker', *Notes and Queries*, New Series, (X), 1963, pp. 450-454.

⁴⁵ *The Argosy* was printed by Sampson Low, Marston & Company.

⁴⁶ Malcolm Ewing, *Victorian Wallflowers: A Panoramic Survey of the Popular Literary Periodicals*, Kennikat Press, New York, Reissue, 1966, p. 237. Ewing worked extensively from the *Memorials of Mrs Henry Wood by her Son, Charles W. Wood*, Richard Bentley & Son, London, 1894.

Hesba, however, showed little or no charitable inclinations towards publishers. Charity, when it was offered, was for the benefit of deserving readers not undeserving publishers. Having gone through the tortuous process of negotiating better rates for *Little Meg's Children*, she scrawled an immortal phrase in her Log Book:

‘Truly all men are cheats, especially publishers’.⁴⁷

As we know, Hesba had been closely acquainted with Charles Wood professionally, and Wood may have been responsible for providing Hesba with shrewd advice on the basis of his mother's unhappy experiences.⁴⁸ Both wrote best-selling novels for the Scottish Temperance League. When Hesba negotiated with the League in 1870 to have the number of copies of her prize-winning work, *Nellie's Dark Days*, noted on the frontispiece of each new edition, the League assented and paid her prize money plus royalties.⁴⁹

A copy of the book's frontispiece is shown overleaf with one of Hesba's famous iconic waif-like figures, “Waiting for Father”, outside a pub. A classic temperance tale, *Nellie's Dark Days* is filled with every element of sensation and pathos. Nelly's father, Rodney, pledges to stop drinking so that he can care for her. Nelly's mother is dying from consumption, but Rodney's uncontrollable desire for alcohol takes hold again and, to pay for his drink, he pawns Nelly's doll, her only possession. She is seen holding the doll in the illustration. Nelly is distraught as her father destroys the remaining childish faith she had in him. Her doll was, Nelly says, ‘the lady that has come to live with me’. Only Bessie Dingle, the compassionate young lady in the illustration, cares for Nelly left waiting patiently for her father in the snow. The final scene in which Nelly's mother dies, provides the reader with Rodney's last horrifying and disgraceful act. The sweet-smelling violets which Bessie had placed in the corpse's hands on her death bed, Rodney steals for the price of a drink. In divine retribution, he dies in a fire, too drunk to hear Nelly's desperate cries to awaken him. Nelly is thankfully rescued and ‘reclaimed for life’. The book sold cloth-bound for one shilling.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *Log Book*, March 13, 1868.

⁴⁸ Mrs. Henry Wood fared less well at the hands of philanthropic publishers. She was paid one hundred pounds prize-money by the Scottish Temperance League for her novel, *Danesbury House*, but the directors refused her any royalties, despite the fact that the novel sold more than one hundred thousand copies during her own lifetime. Ewing, *Victorian Wallflowers*, p. 238.

⁴⁹ These terms were stated to the Religious Tract Society by Hesba Stretton and recorded in the Copyright Sub-Committee Minutes on Feb. 16, 1871. *Religious Tract Society Correspondence Book No. 129*, Entry 459, p. 207, [Microfiche] School of African and Oriental Studies, London.

⁵⁰ *Nelly's Dark Days*, Scottish Temperance League, Glasgow, 1886. The ‘doll’ reference is on p. 30.



WAITING FOR FATHER

Nelly's Dark Days.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"JESSICA'S FIRST PRAYER," "LITTLE MEG'S CHILDREN,"
"ALONE IN LONDON," &c.



Ninety-fifth Thousand.

GLASGOW:
SCOTTISH TEMPERANCE LEAGUE.
LONDON: HOULSTON & SONS;
AND NATIONAL TEMPERANCE LEAGUE.
EDINBURGH: JOHN MENZIES & CO.
1886.

Plate 25: *Nellie's Dark Days*, Frontispiece, New Edition 1886. Ninety-fifth Thousand.⁵¹

⁵¹

Editions of *Nelly's Dark Days* were published without Hesba Stretton's name but 'By the Author of "Jessica's First Prayer ... etc.,". This rare copy is held in the Goldsmith's Library, University of London. Hesba's royalties from this book are unknown but may have amounted to just under £1000, working on a rule of thumb payment of £6 - £8 per 1000 copies.

Despite Hesba's demand—the terms she required following those offered by the Scottish Temperance League who paid one hundred pounds, no limitation in time on royalties, £25 for the first thousand copies and thereafter only a small reduction—the Religious Tract Society would not accept the same conditions. They did, however, agree to pay royalties. The Society also signalled its intention to buy the copyright outright from Houlston & Wright after ten years. The Religious Tract Society bought as many of her copyrights as they could when she reduced her literary output in the late 1880s, and in a *quid pro quo* arrangement which was philanthropic in intent, Hesba agreed to the publication of “cheap” editions at the end of the ten year period. Her generous offer was presumably made in this instance to further the temperance message of the book.⁵² Houlston & Wright were still publishing *Nellie's Dark Days* in 1886.

Charlotte Maria Tucker and Felicia Skene took different approaches with their publishers; neither writer tackled the subject of payments as directly as Hesba, but both underscored the need for cheap editions to assist philanthropic causes fully. This is not to suggest that they avoided discussion on the question of payment, but rather to argue that they skilfully placed the onus on publishers to pay, often in kind.

Thomas Nelson & Son had regular communications from Charlotte Maria Tucker when she was in England and when she lived in India. One of her few surviving letters to Thomas Nelson & Son dated April, 1864, indicates the business-like approach she took in getting her work published—what stands out is that, unlike Hesba, A.L.O.E. does not ask for payment:

Dear Sir

I have the pleasure to forward the remaining books (or chapters) of “*Miracles of Heavenly Love*” All are carefully numbered, to be in proper order for the volume edition. I sent you the preface before.

The next work which I propose sending to you is “*Exiles in Babylon*”, the history of Daniel treated in the same manner as that of David in my “*Shepherd of Bethlehem*”.

Believe me to remain, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully, C.M. Tucker (A.L.O.E.)⁵³

⁵² When the Religious Tract Society bought the copyright of *Nellie's Dark Days* from the Scottish Temperance Society, they paid Hesba royalties but would not agree to showing the number of editions printed as this was ‘wholly alien to the practice of the Society’. RTS, Minute Book 129, 1871.

⁵³ CMT to Thomas Nelson & Sons, April 11, 1864, MSS, ADD 45918, British Library, London.

Her consistent sales provided Nelson's with regular income and they readily acquiesced to her requests for cheaper copies of her own books for distribution in ragged schools and elsewhere. When A.L.O.E. taught at the Saffron Hill Ragged School in the 1860s, some of her books published by Nelson surely reached her charges.⁵⁴ Later, her resolve to publish "one pie" stories for Indian readers suited the evangelical aims of the company. Thomas Nelson had established his business 'motivated by an evangelical zeal to spread the word of God'. According to Alistair McCleery, Nelson's secular publishing was originally only an adjunct 'to create an element of cross-subsidy [and] to increase his profile among booksellers and public'.⁵⁵ As times changed, and sons William and Thomas took over, the emphasis on purely religious publishing weakened but the publisher provided an outlet for A.L.O.E. and other writers who provided the public with good and moral books. Nelson's, not directly involved in philanthropic activities, supported those writers who were involved in Christian missionary work.⁵⁶

Charlotte began her writing career under the wing of Gall and Inglis of Edinburgh and she confided her aims to this congenial publisher and made pointed suggestions:

A.L.O.E. presents her compliments to Messrs. Gall and Inglis, and, admiring the elegant form in which they have presented *The Claremont Tales* to the public, is happy to offer to them for publication the accompanying volume of poems, —asking no further remuneration than 20 copies of the work, when printed, for *gratuitous* distribution. ...

A.L.O.E. would be glad to know whether Messrs. Gall and Inglis propose adopting her suggestion of printing some or all of *The Claremont Tales* in a *very cheap form*, for distribution amongst poor children, Ragged Schools etc., [*italics in original letter*].⁵⁷

A.L.O.E. had already made her intentions known to W. & R. Chambers who were well-known Scottish philanthropists. They did not take up the offer of her writing, perhaps because she made plain her position: 'I ask for no earthly remuneration'.⁵⁸ They may have expected her to ask for free copies but as their own profit margins were slim, they could not subsidize an unknown writer's philanthropic intentions.⁵⁹ Later, Thomas

54 Charlotte Tucker taught at the Saffron Hill Ragged School in 1869. According to Kathleen Heasman, A.L.O.E. was responsible for arranging short holidays in the country for some of the poorest children of the parish of Saffron Hill near Clerkenwell. Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action*, p. 82.

55 Alistair McCleery, 'Thomas Nelson & Sons', *British Literary Publishing Houses, 1820-1880*, p. 219.

56 *Ibid.*, 220.

57 Giberne, *A Life of A.L.O.E.*, p. 93.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

59 Chambers lost money on their heavily subsidized *Penny Magazine* which collapsed in the mid 1840s. The Chamberss were well-known philanthropists in Edinburgh and donated a library, art gallery, museum and lecture hall to the people of the city, in addition to paying for the restoration of St. Giles's Church. Lowell T. Frye, 'W. & R. Chambers', in *British Literary Publishing Houses, 1820-1880*, p. 90.

Nelson could afford to carry A.L.O.E. firstly, because anything she wrote attracted sales which were sure and steady and secondly, *because* she required no earthly remuneration. Her vagueness about precisely where her work would appear is apparent. She simply had no interest in the money. In 1876, she reported to her sister, Laura:

As regards my little Indian Tales, I have sent a good many to Nelson, who has accepted them; and consequently I suppose intends to publish them. It is very likely that they have been appearing in the *Family Treasury*...⁶⁰

A.L.O.E. was a useful conduit for Nelson's books into India. She taught at the new Boy's School in Batala, the "Plough School", and introduced them to English textbooks published by Nelson as well as illustrated stories and, of course, the Bible. She informed Nelson's that one of her converts, Mera Bhatija, intended to open a reading room in Batala in 1880, in which he proposed to offer Bibles, books, and periodicals. As she said, 'Many of the lads now can read a little in English ... *The Illustrated* ... will form one of the baits'.⁶¹ This was a tremendous incentive for a commercially-inclined though still evangelically-inspired publishing house. Nelson's were left in no doubt as to A.L.O.E.'s mission. When her books were sent for publication in England, she made it clear that the proceeds would go towards her local work in India.⁶²

One letter dated January 1890, is quoted in full here, (a portion is cited in an earlier chapter), because it provides a typical example of the subtle exchange which took place between writer and publisher. Implicit in A.L.O.E.'s words is her demand for *quid pro quo*, though she couches her demand in different terms to Hesba Stretton:

Dear Sir

I am much pleased to hear that *Beyond the Black Water* is out at last, and return you many thanks for the copies for presentation, kindly sent for me.

The subject of 'cheap editions' of works published long ago is of great interest to me. I am living in an immense country, swarming with Muhammadans, Hindus, and Infidels, where Government is educating tens of thousands of lads, without giving them any religious instruction ... An evident breakwater for the waves of impiety and sedition is religious literature. But it must be very cheap, or hardly any Natives will buy it. I saw long ago in a Report on the Christian Vernacular Society, that for one book costing, if I remember rightly, about threepence, forty are sold costing a pie, less than a farthing. I resolved to write one-pie stories; did so; and thousands and tens of thousands have been sold.

⁶⁰ Giberne, *The Life and Letters of A.L.O.E.*, p. 232.

⁶¹ CMT, Dec. 8, 1879, *ibid.*, p. 330.

⁶² One of A.L.O.E.'s missionary friends, Dr. Weitbrecht, stated that she wrote her books during her brief summer holidays. When she felt her writing powers were failing, she set aside some of her patrimony to support the same causes, in particular, the Plough School. Giberne, *The Life and Letters of A.L.O.E.*, p. 435.

A lady here told me that *The Young Pilgrim* is out of print. She has vainly attempted to buy it. A cheap edition of that might, by God's blessing, be useful in India. Good paper is not needed ; but clear type and a bright cover - not pink - as that soon fades in India.

As I went along in my duli, a kind of square box carried by men, today, to visit villages, I thought that *The Giant Killer*—only the parable part, which would make a very moderate-sized book—might have a large circulation here. Natives like parables ; and though the English portion of the volume, describing the Roby family, might not be suited to Oriental readers, Giant Sloth, Selfishness, etc., are quite as troublesome in India as in England.

Would you like to make an experiment with this small publication? If so, I should gladly make myself purchase for poor India £10 of cheap copies,—not more than sixpence each,—to be sent as from me to the Christian Vernacular Society's House, Madras. As soon as I heard of the parcel being shipped, I would send the cheque.⁶³

This letter, a combination of evangelical zeal, philanthropic intentions and commercial awareness, exemplifies the symbiosis referred to in the opening of this chapter. This canniness energised the union of publishing and philanthropy.

Felicia Skene's approaches to publishers changed little over the years. She always emphasised that her writing was important for philanthropic causes, whether it was to assist a particular family or to bring before the world pressing social issues. She wrote upon distressing topics including the evils of prostitution and suicide, the death penalty, animal vivisection and the need for prison reform, all of which involved discussion of moral reform and practical philanthropic work. There was always a slight degree of obsequiousness in Felicia's tone, but dwelling always upon her experience in philanthropic social work, she had little or no trouble convincing publishers that she was well qualified to write. In this, she was explicitly entrepreneurial, suggesting to her publishers that they stood to gain while assisting others to perform good works.

Felicia addressed a letter in 1850 to John Murray which left the publisher in no doubt as to her purposes in writing:

You were kind enough to say you would look over the little volume I left with you in order to ascertain whether it could be suitable for publication when remodelled, with a new introduction treating historically of the Phanariotes of Constantinople during the last fifty years which were so full of striking incidents.⁶⁴

⁶³ CMT to Thomas Nelson, Jan 28, 1890, *ibid.*, p. 454.

⁶⁴ The Phanariotes were high class Christians who resided in the Greek or Phanar quarter of Constantinople. Members of this group were one of the class of Greek officials who fitted uneasily into the Ottoman Empire. Felicia's association with this group came through her sister's and brother's marriages into a high ~~rank~~ Greek family. Her knowledge and interest in their history was undoubtedly fuelled by living and travelling in the region. It will be recalled that Murray had refused her manuscript of *Wayfaring Sketches Among the Greek and Turks*, in 1846.

I am well aware how more than fully you are occupied but at any time when you have a moment to spare I should be glad to know what you think of this little matter as it is for various reasons of importance for me not to lose time in bringing out a work of some kind.

I shall not trouble you with specimens of the other subjects I mentioned to you until I know if that now in your hands meets with your approval as I have always thought it might be satisfactorily arranged into a little volume for publication. I should be quite sorry to ask your attention even for a moment from your own more important business were it my own interests which is concerned in these little affairs, but I may just mention to you that the reason which I feel sure will seem to you a sufficient excuse that a family whom I pledged myself to assist to the utmost of my power by means of my writings are now depending entirely on me for a considerable sum absolutely necessary to them and I am therefore naturally anxious not to delay doing what I can —.⁶⁵

While not exactly a begging letter—Felicia Skene is emphatic with her underscore—this signals that her interest in publication was secondary to assisting others. Her goal was evidently private philanthropy to be achieved through publishing. Murray, unlike other publishers, refused to be drawn into Felicia Skene's good works, and the work she referred to remained unpublished. As it turned out, she had better luck elsewhere with her religious novels, the proceeds of which she directed towards philanthropic causes such as the House of Refuge in Oxford. F. & J. Rivington, Edmonston & Douglas, Colburn, Joseph Masters, Chapman & Hall, Mowbray, W.H. Allen & Company, and Elliott Stock, all published her works during the period 1860 to 1880, but no correspondence with them has survived.⁶⁶

Skene's biographer suggests that Felicia refused to be dissuaded by unenthusiastic publishers, particularly if she had pledged money to one of her worthy

⁶⁵ Felicia Skene to John Murray Nov. 4, 1850. *Correspondence Book*, Murray's Archives, Albemarle Street, London.

⁶⁶ The only correspondence which covers the early period 1840-1850, are Felicia's letters to John Murray and the correspondence between her father, James, and her brothers, William and George Skene, which remains intact in the Albemarle Street publisher's well-ordered correspondence books. I am indebted to Virginia Murray for allowing me to work my way through all Murray's correspondence books from 1835 to 1903. In these books, I discovered that the Skenes had a longstanding correspondence and acquaintance with the Murray publishing dynasty dating from 1835. E.C. Rickards had extensive correspondence with Murray on matters relating to her biography of Felicia Skene in 1901-2. One point took up many letters on the subject of auricular and general confession. Lady Sophia Palmer, Felicia's friend, produced a short but controversial memoir for inclusion in Rickards' biography in which she insisted that Felicia Skene approved of auricular confession. [Cf. *Punch's* cartoon, this thesis.] Felicia's family all disagreed and wrote to Murray's expressing their distress. Lady Sophia finally retracted one paragraph at the family's request but added a footnote to her memorial which expounded on the desirability of open confession and on Felicia's early 'dependence' upon confession. Charles W. Wood also corresponded with Murray on the subject, and his memorial of Felicia Skene is also appended to Rickards' biography. Zoe Thompson's letters are also kept in Murray's archive. Zoe was Felicia's beloved niece and the wife of the Archbishop of York and she evidently provided Murray's with a number of photographs which appear in the biography.

causes.⁶⁷ Though literary acclaim was not the primary aim, like most writers, she was delighted to receive compliments and she worked determinedly to succeed; she was no shrinking violet. Her 'writing for a purpose', while not always of the highest literary quality, was always craftsmanlike and demonstrated both a brisk intelligence and wide social knowledge. Her articles for journals often drew favourable comments, including those from Major Arthur Griffiths, Prison Governor, Prison Inspector and well-known writer on prisons,⁶⁸ and William Tallack, secretary of the Howard Association.⁶⁹ Griffiths, like Tallack, came to know of Felicia's prison visiting only through articles she wrote for *Blackwood's Magazine* on the subject of prisoners and prison management and through letters to *The Times* concerning lady prison visitors.

Felicia's friend, Frances Power Cobbe, described certain unnamed charity workers she had observed as 'lady guerillas of philanthropy'.⁷⁰ While Felicia did not wage war on her publishers, (nor did she inflict herself upon unwilling 'victims' of philanthropy), she undoubtedly manoeuvred in ways which promoted her own views. Her correspondence is instructive: she flattered her publishers, she eagerly sought their advice, and then pushed them to publish. She was also an inveterate name-dropper and never hesitated to let one publisher know that another was interested in publishing her work. Two letters written in November 1862, to Sir Walter Trevelyan, the temperance campaigner, are revealing:⁷¹

⁶⁷ Rickards notes: '[Felicia] aimed her literary arrows at a variety of Magazines, and when, as was often the case, they made an unwelcome return home again from one editor, she shot them off promptly to another; and almost invariably, they hit the mark at last'. *Felicia Skene in Oxford*, p. 329.

⁶⁸ Arthur George Griffiths, (1838-1908), was deputy prison governor of Chatham and Millbank, and Governor of ⁱⁿWorwood Scrubs. He undertook the task of unifying prisons and methods of prison administration; he was an acknowledged author on European prison systems and historian of London's gaols. His monograph of John Howard won the Tsar's gold medal. He also wrote sensational tales of prison life, including *Secrets of the Prison House*, 1893, *Some Criminals I have Known*, 1895 and *Mysteries of Police and Crime*, 1898. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement, 1911, pp. 170-1.

⁶⁹ William Tallack was a Quaker. He lobbied for 'efficient visitors' who 'possessed the great gift of power over the heart and lives of criminals'. Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action*, pp. 172-3. He wrote a full obituary of Felicia Skene's life for the *Morning Post*, which is discussed in the following chapter. In his book, *Penological and Preventive Principles*, Werthumer, Lea & Co., London, Tallack referred to Felicia Skene's work in the Oxford Gaol. He also mentioned that in a period of three years, from 1878, Felicia had found employment for sixty women discharged from gaol. This, he wrote, 'was accomplished by her individual efforts, and in the absence, at that time, of any local society for aiding prisoners on their discharge'. Tallack, p. 250. He referred to her work again in his study, *Howard Letters and Memories*, Methuen & Co., London, 1905, pp. 199-201.

⁷⁰ Frances Power Cobbe, 'Celibacy v. Marriage. Old Maids, Their Sorrows and Pleasures', *Fraser's Magazine*, Feb. 1862, p. 233.

⁷¹ Sir William Caverley Trevelyan was a co-signatory in 1861 to the foundation documents of the Anglican sisterhood, the Sisterhood of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, with which Felicia Skene and Reverend Thomas Chamberlain were also closely associated. Box 4, Archives of Sisterhood of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, Pusey House, Oxford.

My dear Sir Walter

I write merely a line to thank you most sincerely for your kind letter and the promise of your advice and help — I entirely agree with all you say and the facts which have come within the range of my own experience have all led me to the same conclusions— I shall be too thankful if my little book can aid the cause in the smallest degree and I do not rest on my own judgement only in thinking that it may.

One cannot but have some confidence in the power of Truth under any circumstances and my effort was to tell the truth as I had seen it in real life not only in the account of the family whose history is given, but in the minor characters of the Tale. I shall look forward with much pleasure to hearing from you again.⁷²

Sir Walter replied immediately eliciting and immediate response.

My dear Sir Walter

I am extremely grateful to you for so kindly interesting yourself on my behalf — I have forwarded the MS to Mr Baker and I have begged him to be so good as to communicate with me when it has been examined as I should be sorry to give you any further trouble respecting it.

The paper you have been so kind as to send me is indeed very valuable — I have long seen that the strong prejudice of medical men in favour of stimulants is one of the greatest difficulties the cause has to contend with—not the greatest however so long as publicans can obtain licenses at will.

Perhaps you will let me acquaint you with the ultimate fate of my MS— Meantime, believe me with many thanks, F.M.F. Skene.⁷³

The ultimate fate of the manuscript remains unclear and no publication at that time has been found in any publishers' lists, but Felicia Skene's letter indicates the ways she drew support and used the names of influential friends to advance her ideas.

The publisher with whom Felicia Skene had the longest literary partnership was Blackwood's of Edinburgh. She and her family were well-known to William Blackwood and from the 1880s, she published in "Maga", as *Blackwood's Magazine* was affectionately known, and some of her later novels were also taken by them. The correspondence between writer and publisher reveals the close watch each party kept on social issues, contemporary events and sales figures. Entrepreneurial rather than philanthropic interests were uppermost in William Blackwood's calculations—however,

⁷² Felicia Skene to Sir Walter Trevelyan, Nov. 3, 1862, ALS, Special Collections, Robinson Library, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, U.K.

⁷³ Felicia Skene to Sir Walter Trevelyan, Nov 8, 1862, ALS, Special Collections, Robinson Library, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, U.K.

he listened carefully to Felicia's suggestions and wrote in 1886, that he was 'very hopeful of ... having a successful venture together'.⁷⁴

Concerned by the link between ~~the~~ temperance story Skene had written in 1862, *Hidden Depths* published in 1866, and her latest novel, *A Strange Inheritance*, which Blackwood's published in 1886, Felicia wrote to ask Blackwood whether he objected to the title page on a reprint of her temperance story, now twenty three years old, bearing a note that it was written "by the author of *Hidden Depths*". Felicia worried that readers might gain the wrong impression of her new novel and her letter, though long-winded, is reproduced because it touches on all facets of publishing, potential sales, the use of pseudonym, and Skene's philanthropic interests:

Dear Mr Blackwood

I received an unexpected letter from Messrs. W.H. Allen, Publishers to the India Office, wishing to undertake the reprint of a Temperance Story of mine which was passed through the columns of the *Alliance News* nearly twenty three years ago through the agency of a friend of ours, the late Sir Walter Trevelyan. It has been laid aside since then though the Editor of the paper wished its republication—but I lent it lately to a lady whose cousin is partner to Messrs. Allen—she showed it to him and now the firm writes to offer to publish it on favourable terms—it could not possible clash with "A Strange Inheritance" as it is a mere Temperance story and it cannot appear until long after our venture will have met its fortunes in the world but the point on which I am anxious to know your wishes is this —

Messrs. Allen stipulate that "by the author of *Hidden Depths*" should appear on the Title Page — Have you any objection to this? I do not know whether you mean this designation to appear on the title of of "A Strange Inheritance" or whether you would prefer to give my own name (by F.M.F. Skene) as has been done with most of my writings or whether you would like it to appear anonymously— you will judge much better than I can what will best tend the success of the book and I shall be pleased with whatever you wish— but I half fear the mentioned of "Hidden Depths" might give a false impression of "A Strange Inheritance" which might be thought to deal with equivocal subjects also — and that my own name or none would be better. If, however, you do mean to give "the author of *Hidden Depths*", do you at all object to Messrs. Allen doing the same at a later period their their Temperance Story?

I shall not give my consent to their using it till I know your wishes on the subject. We are going on most rapidly with the proofs.

Sincerely yours, F.M.F. Skene.⁷⁵

The "Temperance Story" to which Felicia refers appeared in 1887 as *The Lesters: A Family Record*, published in two volumes by W.H. Allen & Company. *A Strange*

⁷⁴ William Blackwood to Felicia Skene, April 30, 1886, *Blackwood Papers*, Outgoing Correspondence, p. 116f. MS 30372, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁷⁵ Felicia Skene to William Blackwood, May 13, 1886, *Blackwood Papers*, Incoming Correspondence, MS 4492, folios 5-6, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Inheritance was published by W. Blackwood & Sons in 1886 in three volumes, and *Hidden Depths* as we know, was republished by Shepherd & Company in 1886, going immediately into six editions. *A Strange Inheritance*, a novel set in Scotland involving money, ghosts, romance and scandal, was a flop in England and lost money for both Blackwood and Skene who had agreed on a half-profits agreement. It was pirated in 1887 by Harpers in America, sold at twenty-five cents a copy and made money, but only for the publisher.

A copy of the cover of the cheap American copy and a list of other works in Harper's series, are shown here. Felicia asked Blackwood to procure a cheap American copy for her friend Elizabeth Sewell, the High Church author of more evangelical fiction, but Blackwood's informed her that the cheap "foreign" version was not allowed into the country to "protect" the interests of British publishers—writers, of course, were not protected.

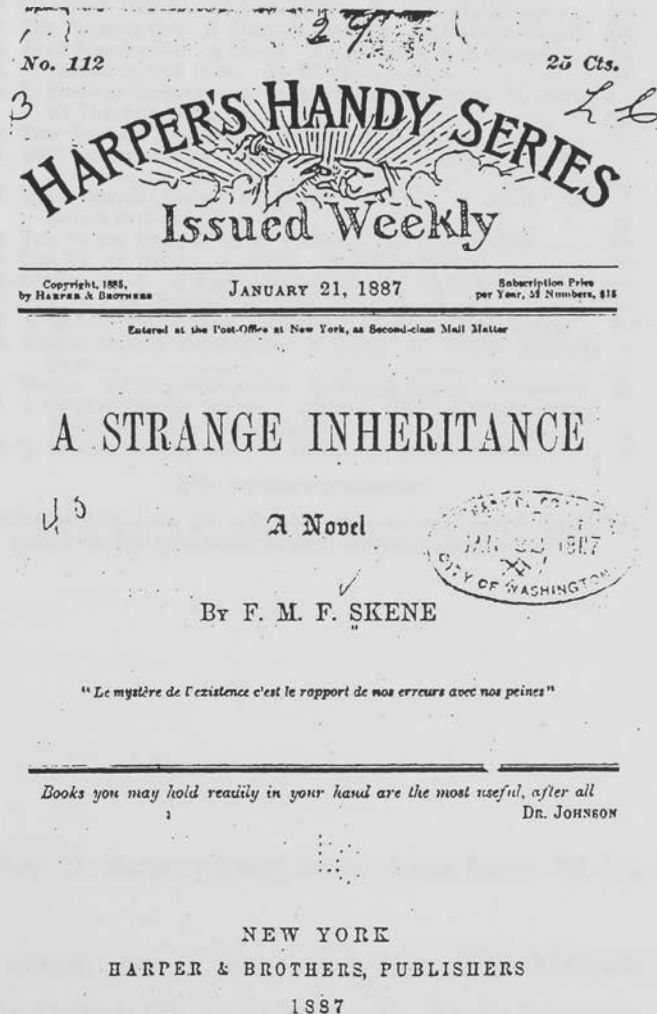


Plate 26: *A Strange Inheritance*, A Novel by F.M.F. Skene.

(Notice that "*Hidden Depths*" is not mentioned on the title page. This cheap edition had a red card cover and was inexpensively bound, unlike Blackwood's version which was in cloth hard-cover).

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111.	A CHILD OF THE REVOLUTION. A Novel. By the Author of "The Atelier du Lys." Illustrated.....	25
112.	A STRANGE INHERITANCE. A Novel. By F. M. F. Skene.....	25

Other volumes in preparation.

HARPER & BROTHERS will send any of the above works by mail, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States or Canada, on receipt of the price.

Plate 27: Harper's Handy Series - Latest Issues, No. 112, 1887.⁷⁶

Felicia, it is noted, was in good company: Mrs Oliphant, Rosa Mulholland, Manville Fenn, Wilkie Collins, Charlotte M Yonge, Annie Edwardes, and the Australian, Mrs. Campbell-Praed, presumably had had their works similarly pirated.

⁷⁶ This rare copy came from the Library of Congress, Washington, DC, USA.

Blackwood provided a free copy of their own three-volumed version to Felicia for presentation to her Oxford friend, but accompanied it with the news that they still held a large number of copies in stock, 'having sold 230 copies out of the 788 copies printed'. Blackwood said he was puzzled at the book's failure, but did not spare Felicia the distressing details:

I am sorry to say a heavy loss to us in the undertaking, although we spent £72.15.5d on the advertising. ... We bound too many at first thinking we were sure to sell all ... we have 150 in stock in boards. If you would like to present any of these free to libraries, we would be very happy to let you have them as many as you desire at five shillings a copy. I enclose your statement of the expenses and sales that you may see exactly the result of the undertaking.

Regretting it has not proved more successful.⁷⁷

Blackwood did not suggest that the three-volume novel might have been overpriced—it sold initially at twenty-five shillings and sixpence, just over one guinea—and he went on to suggest that he should have acted more wisely:

I should have withheld from the title page the name of your other work, "*Hidden Depths*", as it has in some measure militated against the libraries venturing to take many copies, from their making the excuse that your former work was not one to be put into the hands of young girls.⁷⁸

Mudie's legacy of prudishness evidently lingered and young girls were still regarded as susceptible creatures in need of protection from pernicious fiction.

There was an odd final twist to this tale. On November 15, 1895, Falconer Madan, sub-librarian of the Bodleian Library in Oxford from 1880 to 1912, wrote to Felicia Skene asking about *Hidden Depths*. She replied, confirming that she was the author of the book, asking him why he was interested in it. She reported that her book 'had no connection whatever with the dreadful Continent traffic but was simply the result of my own experience in such cases'. She referred to a recent Parliamentary inquiry into the White Slave Trade. Madan's friend, Reverend J.F. Heyes of Oxford, wrote to Madan in 1896 with his recollections of Felicia Skene:

The lady, now in the silvery age, is still resident in Oxford in New Inn Hall Street and she's much better known to struggling girls than to society which she does not enter. I, too, have forgotten the details but I am pretty certain that it [*Hidden Depths*] is based on Oxford facts, especially the intellectual and moral strains, but that Oxford was not

⁷⁷ William Blackwood to Felicia Skene, March 1, 1888, Outgoing Correspondence, p. 420f. MS 30374, *Blackwood Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁷⁸ William Blackwood to Felicia Skene, Oct. 15, 1886, Outgoing Correspondence, p. 368, MS 30372, *Blackwood Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

named. The writer's name was not given, only in the cheap re-print. I think Miss Skene's brother was Historiographer Royal in Scotland'.⁷⁹

Despite her supposed anonymity, *Hidden Depths* seemed to haunt her. As a result of its mention, more than twenty years later, Felicia bore a loss on *A Strange Inheritance*. In an unnecessary act of honour, she refused payment for the first two articles she provided Blackwood's on prisons from her subsequently successful series of articles, 'Scenes from a Silent World'. This she did in order to 'diminish' Blackwood's loss. Uncharitably, but in keeping with the spirit of entrepreneurial capitalism, Blackwood accepted her offer. In this instance, philanthropy and publishing did not mix. Later, Blackwood, who became enthusiastically involved in the Salvation Army's establishment,⁸⁰ (though later repudiating it), took a more philosophical view of Felicia Skene's philanthropic work and allowed her voice to speak on the issue of prisons, capital punishment and penal reform.

Muffled Radicals - Philanthropic Interests and Women's Voices

Elizabeth Gaskell—it is claimed—'muffled her radical impulses' and retreated from controversy into several years' silence following the publication of her social protest novel, *Mary Barton*.⁸¹ Gaskell was one of the first nineteenth-century novelists to criticize the treatment of so-called fallen women and deal with the subjects of sexual transgression and seduction. In 1866, Felicia Skene followed suit with *Hidden Depths*. Like Gaskell, Skene may be fairly described as a muffled radical, but while she never wrote another novel as sensational, ^{Skene} never retreated from her philanthropic work nor abandoned the penitents, prostitutes and prisoners about whom she wrote. They remained the subjects of her compassion and conviction until the end of her life and, in hastening their welfare, she put forward critical and constructive opinions.

* e.g.
Ruth
publ. 1853.

Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton, and Charlotte Maria Tucker were amongst those unenfranchised mid-nineteenth-century women who nevertheless participated in the broader

⁷⁹ ALS, Falconer Madan to J.F. Heyes, Nov. 15, 1895; ALS F.M.F. Skene to Falconer Madan, Nov. 17, 1895; ALS J.F. Heyes to Falconer Madan, March 29, 1896. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library, Connecticut, USA.

⁸⁰ William Blackwood and Lord Shaftesbury attended a Salvation Army meeting at Clapton Hall in 1882, but were shocked at the irreverence of the meeting and withdrew their support. *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, Vol. III, CMS, London, 1899, p. 290.

⁸¹ Charlotte Lennox-Boyd, 'A Muffled Radical', review article, [*Elizabeth Gaskell: The critical heritage*, Angus Easson, (ed.), 1992], *Times Literary Supplement*, March 20, 1992, p. 22. *Mary Barton* was first published in 1848.

legislative process through writing and philanthropic work.⁸² They raised their voices through fiction “founded on fact”, reinforced by their professional experience.

Writing as Francis Scougal, Felicia Skene was the pseudonymous author of *Scenes From a Silent World or Prisons and Their Inmates*, published by William Blackwood in 1889. This book provides an important example of the links between publishing and the philanthropic interests of writers and publishers, and the specialised knowledge held by certain writers. As the frontispiece to the volume noted: ‘These Papers originally appeared in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, and are now reprinted with an Introduction, large additions, and a new chapter on Capital Punishment’.⁸³ Drawing upon thirty years’ experience as an unofficial and official prison visitor, Felicia Skene wrote a series of articles for ‘*Maga*’ which received a good deal of attention from senior officials and legislators, including Benjamin Jowett. She had written on the subject of prisons as early as 1867 for *Good Words*. In 1880, she produced an article on prison visiting for *Fraser’s Magazine*; in 1892 she wrote for ‘*Maga*’ on the system of prison visiting instituted in modern Greece by the Queen of Greece,⁸⁴ and between 1896 and 1899, she produced a series on topics related to prisons and prisoners’ care for *The Hospital*.⁸⁵

⁸² Joseph Kestner amplifies this point in his study, *Protest and Reform: The British Social Narrative by Women, 1827-1867*, Methuen, London, 1985, p. 13. Kestner’s thesis concentrates upon ‘the writings of female social novelists [which] supplemented rather than imitated Blue Books’. He argues that social fiction ‘appropriated to itself a territory occupied by male legislators’ and that women writers successfully exposed conditions — ‘the historical value of their work lies in its role as a complement to primary evidence’. Kestner, p. 213. My own view is that writers such as Skene, Stretton and Tucker went beyond Blue Books by actually working in philanthropic fields. As we know, both Skene and Stretton were highly regarded by influential legislators such as Lord Shaftesbury and those, like Benjamin Jowett, who gave evidence to Parliamentary committees.

⁸³ Garland Publishing, Inc., New York and London, 1984, has reproduced Felicia Skene’s full work *Scenes From Silent World*, in their series, *Crime and Punishment in England 1850-1922*. They have reproduced in facsimile thirty titles ‘documenting the dramatic changes in the extent and character of crime and society’ a attitudes towards criminals during the period’. The series is edited by Martin J. Wiener, Rice University.

⁸⁴ This particular article hastened lengthy correspondence from Felicia Skene to Blackwood. She wrote the article after translating papers that she had received from Greece on prison visiting and ‘general amelioration’ of the Greek system. She asked for an indication of whether Blackwood was interested in publishing: ‘I do not care to enter on the labour it would involve without some prospect.’ [Jan 5, 1892]. She pushed by saying that the Queen of Greece was delighted at the prospect of *Maga*’s article and had asked when the article was likely to appear. Felicia informed Blackwood that the Queen had passed information about the forthcoming article to her sister and brother-in-law ‘at Marlborough House’ (the Duke and Duchess of York). [March 22, 1892]. The article finally appeared in July 1892. Felicia received nine pounds in payment. MS 4593, *Blackwood’s Papers*, Incoming Correspondence, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁸⁵ F.M.F. Skene, ‘A Released Prisoner’, *Good Words*, December, 1867. F.M.F. Skene, ‘Prison Visiting’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, Vol. 22, New Series, 1880, ‘The Treatment of Criminals in Modern Greece: The Association in Christ’, F.M.F. Skene, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, July 1892, Series, *The Hospital*, 1896-1899 (see Bibliography for full details).

In her article for *Fraser's Magazine*, Felicia raised her voice about the need for women visitors for male and female prisoners, and insisted that prison visitors remain unpaid. In this way, she argued, a visitor's independence remained uncompromised. She also expressed strong views on preaching to prisoners—'lady preachment'—which she considered both inappropriate and ineffective: 'No, the only plan is to have *tête-à-tête* interviews, and win confidence, through interest in the prisoner's personal history'. She cited the case of a man sentenced to life imprisonment. Referring to her own experience, 'when the writer was first left alone with the prisoner [who was under the impression that she was "paid" to visit], he maintained an attitude of stolid indifference. ... When at last the fact was forced upon him, by reiterated assurances, that the visitor had no other object save to be a friend to him in any way that might be possible, his genuine amazement was very touching'.⁸⁶ Felicia continued to believe that true philanthropy was given freely, from one human being to another, not through a system of government payment.

As a result of the interest in 'Scenes from a Silent World' which had appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, William Blackwood agreed to publish an expanded volume. Felicia was anxious not to incur another loss and wrote: 'If you were to lose in any way by the publication of my "Scenes", I think I would hang myself—notwithstanding the strong objection to that mode of departure which I manifest in the book itself—seriously it has been to me a most real and lasting distress that you lost so much on the novel [*A Strange Inheritance*].'⁸⁷ Blackwood recognised that Felicia's specialised knowledge was responsible for its success and he cautiously agreed to the inclusion of a chapter on the death penalty, a topic which had been omitted deliberately left out of *Blackwood's Magazine*.⁸⁸ Felicia masculinized her family name for use as an 'incognita' as she put it, but the issue of anonymity provoked lively correspondence between writer and publisher.

For Felicia there were pressing ethical implications—prison visitors had to remain unidentifiable. She was anxious to avoid friction with the authorities since official permission from the Prison Commissioners had been granted reluctantly to women in 1878, only after a long struggle for recognition.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ F.M.F. Skene, 'Prison Visiting', *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. 223, New Series, 1880, p. 763.

⁸⁷ Felicia Skene to Blackwood, Aug. 13. 1889, MS 4542, folios 36-7, Incoming Correspondence, *Blackwood's Papers*, National Library of Scotland.

⁸⁸ Felicia wrote: 'I quite understand your wish that *Maga* should not seem to sanction any theories against the capital penalty, and I have therefore carefully eliminated from the enclosed proofs every word which could seem to bear that construction'. Felicia Skene to Blackwood, Jan. 10, 1889, MS 4542, folio 1, Incoming Correspondence, *Blackwood's Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁸⁹ After 1877 and the passage of the Prison Act, Sir Edward Du Cane, Chairman of the Prison Commissioners, reluctantly admitted that lady visitors did some useful work in local prisons. According to Prochaska, after 1892, there were 54 prisons which admitted female prisoners, of these, 29 admitted women visitors and the number rose during the 1890s. 'The Home Office

Despite her experience, she decided to remain ‘muffled’:

I am particularly anxious to omit altogether the words “by a prison visitor”—they were used in *Maga* as explaining the title—but they are not the least required now—it is plain enough from the book itself that I am one—but I have to consider the Prison Commissioners who may chance to see the book and I think it would be better they should not find me calling myself a prison visitor—I think they would at once guess my name inspite of the book being anonymous—as there are very few lady visitors all counted.⁹⁰

Arthur Griffiths was struck by Felicia Skene’s expertise in *Scenes from a Silent World*. He made it his business to find out who wrote as “Francis Scougal”, then invited her to visit Wormwood Scrubs, which she did in 1894. He later recalled:

Her influence with the unfortunate women was great, and generally lasting. They soon saw how deep and abounding was her sympathy, how keenly she desired to lead them back to the right path, gently and persuasively, but with no sort of reproof or reproach. She was indefatigable in giving active help wherever possible. The aid that comes to the prisoners on leaving the place of penalty is often the most valuable in preserving them from new lapses, and Miss Skene recognised this to the full. ... Miss Skene gave the best proof of her earnestness by seeking to secure the welfare of her charge when they were once more free. She watched over them continually, following them if she could with good counsel and often substantial aid, and striving to interest others in them. Miss Skene made no distinctions: her ministrations were at the service of all, freely and unceasingly. ... There is no part of modern prison management that shows more marked results than the system of visitation by ladies now generally adopted.⁹¹

Behind the conventional phraseology we glimpse Felicia Skene’s professionalism and generosity. Her house in New Inn Hall Street was always open; an offering in trust which was rarely, if ever, abused by the itinerants and discharged prisoners who called on her help.⁹² She was consulted by prisoners and prison governors, and approached by Adeline, Duchess of Bedford—future founder of the Association of Prison Visitors in 1901—for advice on “difficult cases”.⁹³ Pseudonyms did not guarantee anonymity.

imposed strict limitations on these volunteers; most of their energies had to be channelled through associations devoted to discharged prisoners’. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*, pp. 172-3. Louisa Twining reported that in 1887, there were 318 women employed as Lady Superintendents (with salaries of up to £500 a years), 13 were matrons and the rest were warders. Lady prison visitors were volunteers. Louisa Twining, ‘Women’s Work, Official and Unofficial’, *National Review*, July 1887.

⁹⁰ Felicia Skene to William Blackwood, Sept. 9, 1889, MS 4542, folios 51-52, Incoming Correspondence, *Blackwood’s Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁹¹ Arthur Griffiths, Testimony to Felicia Skene, in E.C. Rickards, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-240.

⁹² See Footnote 69, this thesis, regarding Felicia’s assistance to discharged prisoners.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 240. There is a small amount of information on Adeline, Duchess of Bedford, and the Association of Lady Visitors in Prochaska, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

As her biographer stresses, Felicia was never a sentimentalist, a qualification welcomed by the central committee of the Charity Organisation Society and its Oxford branch. Rickards noted that those who only knew one side of Miss Skene's nature, admired her as the incarnation of tender-heartedness and pity. Others, especially those who paid careful attention to her articles, knew that she eschewed soft and sentimental views. She knew professional 'thieves and villains', habitual liars and those 'whose chief pleasure is in cruelty and ruffianism of all kinds' and took a certain joking pride in having, like Arthur Griffiths, author of a new book, *Criminals I have Known*, 'known a good many criminals too, in my day!'⁹⁴ Yet she was convinced that intractables represented a small percentage of prison populations. Moreover, '... if only a small percentage of the prisoners were radically or permanently benefited, would not such a result be well worth all the efforts that could be made. And even in the case of those apparently hopeless—who can say whether, at some stage of their after career, the memory of wise and true words spoken to them with the prison cells might not come back on them, to bear fruit in a tardy repentance?'⁹⁵ Imprisonment had a purpose for discipline, reform and improvement but, according to Felicia, prisons ought not be inhuman institutions, particularly if the aim was to restore an individual to outside society.

Felicia Skene's aim in writing—not only about prisons and prison administration, but also about punishment, human psychology, suicide or 'self-murder' as she preferred, repentance and reclaiming lives through human beneficence—brought the hidden world of the prison into view: 'Does not the world in general go on its way amid fair sights and engrossing interests, without one thought of those who are lying pent up in the perpetual gloom and silence of the prison walls?'⁹⁶ She was at her most outspoken on the subject of capital punishment, a position which attracted few supporters and many highly placed opponents.

In *Scenes from a Silent World*, she wrote as a Christian who believed that taking of life through judicial means was both unsanctioned by Christian law and subject to the fallibility of human judgment. Her cogent and strikingly modern argument set out a brief social and legal history of capital punishment. She recalled a conversation with one unnamed 'astute politician' who 'strongly advocated capital punishment on the ground that it was the cheapest mode of disposing of criminals'.⁹⁷ She also cited the views of two

⁹⁴ Felicia Skene to William Blackwood, Incoming Correspondence, MS 4652, Jan 29, 1896, folios 138-9, *Blackwood Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁹⁵ Francis Scougal [Felicia Skene], *Scenes from a Silent World*, Introduction, p. xvi.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

retired judges, Sir James Mackintosh and Chief-Baron Kelly, both of whom declared that innocent men [and women] were hanged. Mackintosh estimated one innocent man hanged every three years. Kelly concluded that over a period of thirty-eight years, no ~~fewer~~ than twenty two innocent persons had been sentenced to death, of whom seven were actually executed.⁹⁸ Felicia Skene knew, even without disclosing her female identity, that in her absolute opposition she would be accused of sentimentality:

It will be said that in what we have written against the existing law of capital punishment, we have been actuated by a sentimental tenderness towards crime—a weak desire to spare the murderer the tortures he has inflicted on his victim. It is not so. All who have the welfare of the community at heart, must strongly desire that evil-doers should receive the just reward of their deeds with all due severity. We have already specified certain punishments [life imprisonment, flogging, penal servitude] which criminals dread infinitely more than death, and that are in truth terrible in a far higher degree. Let their crimes be visited by these, and the sternest legislators may rest assured that justice can be fully satisfied; but let not a human touch, even by the impersonal hand of the law, be laid on the sacred, mysterious life which God alone can give, and God alone may righteously take away.⁹⁹

She again raised the death penalty in her last work of fiction, *Through the Shadows: A Test of the Truth*.¹⁰⁰ A chapter headed “Lex Talionis”, [the law of retaliation], turned upon a recent judgment connected with a murder committed by a man while he slept. She had earlier defined this crime as ‘a deed of violence committed under the false impression of a dream when a man was buried in profound slumber, with not the smallest recollection of it [the crime] remaining when he awoke’.¹⁰¹ In her letters to Blackwood, she had criticised the unpopular judge who had passed sentence, Sir Henry Hawkin,¹⁰² and in *Through the Shadows*, she reiterated: ‘[t]hat judge was so inflexible in his administration of the law, that he never leaves a loophole of escape for any murderer. ... [h]e goes by the name of “The Hanging Judge”’. At the trial he charged

⁹⁸ Felicia Skene cited an article which had appeared recently in the *Contemporary Review* entitled ‘The Case against Capital Punishment’.

⁹⁹ *Scenes from a Silent World*, pp. 251-2.

¹⁰⁰ Erskine Moir [Felicia Skene], *Through the Shadows: A Test of the Truth*, Elliot Stock, London, 1888.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 191-201.

¹⁰² Felicia to Blackwood, July 12, 1889. ‘The whole facts respecting the execution of the man who committed the dream crime are most strange. The feeling of the people in his favour was so strong that not only was the execution kept secret to the last moment, but when it did transpire that it was to take place, they were obliged to get a strong body of police to surround the prison or it would have been forcibly broken into—the Governor—by no means a soft-hearted man, was strongly in favour of a reprieve. ... He had reason to know that the Home Secretary wished it himself but according to the usual etiquette he had to consult the judge who tried the man, and that Judge unfortunately was Sir Henry Hawkins who goes by the name of the “Hanging Judge”—indeed the populace give him a yet coarser designation! ... He told a friend of mine whom he met in the train before he had tried the man that he intended to “hang him”. [Underscore in original letter]. MS 4542, folio 30, Incoming Correspondence, *Blackwood’s Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

the jury with being 'a craven set', if they let any feeling of compassion hinder them from a verdict of wilful murder'.¹⁰³

Felicia's insistent message on this issue, as on others, reached out beyond immediate philanthropic circles:

Whether the deductions we have drawn from these cases are correct or not, the facts themselves speak with the voice of truth; and we claim for that voice that it has a right to be heard by all who desire to help and benefit their fellow creatures.

There are many such, happily, in these days; but it may be said that among the seething masses of the poor within our crowded cities, in the workhouses, and hospitals, there is misery and anguish enough to exhaust all philanthropic energies, without seeking an aliment for them in the storehouses of criminals.

If in all the distress and grief we see around us, that which is the most exceptionally bitter and hopeless has the greatest right to our sympathy and assistance, we may well claim it for the mournful wreckage of human life which is cast up on the gloomy prison strand from the ocean of the world's boundless suffering.

This was the voice of a 'strong-minded woman', no member of a 'sentimental priesthood'.¹⁰⁴

So, too with Hesba Stretton: though strangely inhibited when speaking of her fiction, she became explicit and outspoken when on the subject of children's welfare. Hesba's fiction exposed some of the worst conditions in which children were forced to live and foreshadowed the enormous legislative change required to safeguard children's rights—legislation which she fostered alongside her influential associates in the London, later, [National] Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Her knowledge of children's suffering gave shape and force to her views and voice, as well as foreshadowing later social scientists' major surveys and studies of child abuse, homelessness and exploitation.

On the topic of women's mission and on women's rights, Hesba was also no muffled radical. She had declared herself to be a radical in the privacy of a letter to a friend, and though no public announcement of her political views was ever made, her views were distinctly and consistently political. Critical, ascerbic and constructive,

¹⁰³ *Through the Shadows*, pp. 141-2. See also, Henry Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain*, Macmillan, London, 1968, p. 65, on the subject of partiality of judges.

¹⁰⁴ Harriet Taylor Mill used these phrases in her article referred to earlier, 'Enfranchisement of Women'. Mill wanted 'strong-minded women' and 'strong-minded men' to be united through equal education, *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Vol. XXI, Robson (ed.), p. 409. Mill's reference to 'a sort of sentimental priesthood' refers to her argument about equal rights, not separate rights. *Ibid.*, p. 415

Hesba Stretton waged war on social ills. Literary historian Nancy Cutts described her as a 'critic of the law'.

Informing all her writings is a belief in the power of women to effect change, and a demand that society acknowledge the debt owed philanthropic women. Her opening article, 'Women's Work of Children', edited with other papers by Baroness Burdett-Coutts and published by Sampson Low, Marston & Company,¹⁰⁵ reflected upon the philanthropic work of Elizabeth Fry and Hannah More. She also referred to the impact of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem, "Cry of the Children" which, Hesba said, 'rang throughout England and found an echo in every true woman's heart' — 'the consciences of many women were then awakened and have never slumbered again'.¹⁰⁶ She turned to recent philanthropic work for children performed by Maria Rye, who, as well as establishing an emigration scheme for abandoned "gutter" children, had founded a school and home for blind children. She spoke of Mrs. Marie Hilton of the Society of Friends who established a Creche on the Commercial Road in the East End of London, the Home of Industry founded by Miss Macpherson, the Brixton Orphanage for Fatherless Girls founded by Annie Montague, the Home for Crippled Boys and Girls established by Lady Caroline Turner, Ethel Ranyard's Bible Women, the Princess Mary Village Homes for little girls founded by Susanna Meredith, (the same who had worked as a prison visitor), and a host of other anonymous heroines.

Hesba's rallying call was for others to join the corps of women already at work, and she drew confidently upon her own knowledge. Her battle-cry, used at the head of this chapter was, 'where women have their rights, childhood is happy'. For her, the link between female and children's was indivisible. Had she retained her health in the latter years of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth, she would have probably joined the call for women's suffrage.¹⁰⁷ Her writing on war refugees and persecuted Russian Protestants reveals that wider human rights were also part of her mission. Towards the end of her writing career, disenchanted with Gladstonian Liberalism and outside the political realm, Hesba turned her attention to new political ideas, including those of the Russian socialist, Serge Stepniak, with whom she collaborated on a book as well as the communal ideas espoused by Prince Peter Kropotkin and those of the Fabians whose earliest meetings attracted her attention.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Angela Burdett Coutts (ed.), *Woman's Mission: A Series of Congress Papers on the Philanthropic Work of Women by Eminent Writers*, Sampson Low, Marston & Co., London, 1893.

¹⁰⁶ Hesba Stretton, 'Women's Work for Children', *Woman's Mission*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ In her fiction, she alluded to the issue and again implicitly in this article on women's mission.

¹⁰⁸ As mentioned in the early part of this thesis, E.S. Nesbitt, admired Hesba Stretton's writing and may have had contact with her at Fabian Society meetings in Hampstead, and George Bernard Shaw felt well enough acquainted with Hesba Stretton and her writing to seek permission to use the title of one of her books, *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1872), for his own stage play which opened

'Reconceptualising childhood' is how one academic described the results of the work of nineteenth-century humanitarians involved in realising protective legislation for children.¹⁰⁹ Hesba Stretton reconceptualised many childhoods in her writing and created mentor-figures such as *Jessica* and *Little Meg* who remained alive in the memories of readers for a generation or more. In 1893, she wrote that 'the memory of the infant Christ sanctified childhood forever'. On each child, Hesba placed a mark of divinity—each child was 'sacralised'—and the purpose of Hesba's evangelical writing was to draw readers' attention to this truth.¹¹⁰ The tales in which Carola, Jessica, Cassy, Tom Haslam and other waif and stray characters appeared, each represented the potential of every neglected child to be "Reclaimed for Life",¹¹¹ and in Hesba's tales, hospitable adults, through their own innate sense of benevolence or Christian charity, make significant changes in the lives of individual children.¹¹² Hesba Stretton's waifs and strays were discovered in badly-lit cellars, rural hovels, freezing lofts, shop doorways, outside public houses, working on unsafe ships, tending undernourished siblings or comforting dying parents. By bringing them to life through fiction, Hesba Stretton achieved a change in consciousness in advance of official government reports, Booth's and Rowntree's social surveys, and W.T. Stead's newspaper exposés.

Through her writing—widely accessible to all because of its low cost and lucid style—this respectable middle-class woman acknowledged the painful and inured truth that many children were treated as chattels by neglectful, sometimes deliberately cruel, parents, guardians and employers. Hesba's 'Jessica' was an original and stark example, the mid-nineteenth century child whose fictional life made readers weep, some with shame, others with compassion. Her tales drummed the message that: 'in all Christian

in 1906. Correspondence, ALS, George Bernard Shaw to Hesba Stretton, Oct. 8, 1906. Reply, ALS, Hesba Stretton to George Bernard Shaw, Oct. 24, 1906. Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, University of Austin at Texas.

109 Carolyn Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain: Margaret McMillan, 1860-1931*, Virago Press, London, 1990, p. 62.

110 The term 'sacralised' and 'sacralisation' is used by Viviana Zelizer in *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*, Basic Books, New York, 1985.

111 Hesba Stretton wrote an Introduction to a short, illustrated study of Dr. Barnado's scheme to care for destitute children in London. Entitled, *Children Reclaimed for Life: The Story of Dr. Barnado's Work in London*, the frontispiece announced 'With an Introduction by the Author of 'JESSICA'S FIRST PRAYER'. Published by Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1875. Introduction, pp. ix-xvii.

112 Of course, as Patricia Demers points out, Hesba Stretton knew that not all the poor, nor all the rich, were benevolent, and Stretton's writing is often a study of contrasts. Patricia Demers, 'Mrs. Sherwood and Hesba Stretton: The Letter and Spirit of Evangelical Writing: Writing of and for Children', in *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century England*, Edited by James Holt McGavran, Jr., University of George Press, Athens & London, 1991, p. 141. Miserly rich individuals however, remain unforgiven, whereas the poor have some excuse. Hesba Stretton's miserly landlord, Mr Champion, in *The King's Servant's*, is reminiscent of Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.

countries, no child can be born without a share in the inheritance of the common childhood of our Lord'.¹¹³

Hesba was as skilful in her use of allegory as Charlotte Maria Tucker in *Jessica's First Prayer*. She transposes the memory of the infant Christ to the gutter child of the dingy slums of London. Gentle asses are exchanged for donkeys, shepherds are made London costermongers, littered straw, akin to a manger, provides Jessica's bedding. There is little room for Jessica in her mother's life nor in respectable society. Jessica's "home" is depicted with strong biblical images reminiscent of the scene of Christ's birth:

It was a single room, which had once been a hayloft of an old inn, now in use for two or three donkeys, the property of costermongers dwelling in the court about it. The mode of entrance was by a wooden ladder, whose rungs were crazy and broken, and which led up through a trap-door in the floor of the loft. The interior of the home was as desolate and comfortless as that of the stable below, with only a litter of straw for the bedding, and a few bricks and boards for the furniture. Everything that could be pawned had disappeared long ago, and Jessica's mother often lamented that she could not thus dispose of her child. ...

Jess was the drudge and errand-girl of the court; and what with being cuffed and beaten by her mother, and over-worked and illused by her numerous employers, her life was a hard one.¹¹⁴

Making what many would have recognised as a political statement, she wrote in 'Women's Work for Children':

What the nation will be thirty years hence depends chiefly on what the children in the present decade are. The world makes its progress on the little feet of children. That the work of women should ever cease is impossible; but it is more than work for children, it is work for the fatherland, for humanity, for God.¹¹⁵

Hesba Stretton's and Felicia Skene's writing and philanthropy was conducted in England, although the effectiveness of Hesba's writing in particular, was spread through translations and the global distribution network of the Religious Tract Society. Charlotte Maria Tucker spent more than half her life in England where her philanthropic work had been confined to Ragged Schools and local workhouses; her books were read in British homes and schools. After 1875, writing from Batala, Charlotte Maria Tucker was able to 'speak' to wider congregations across Britain and importantly, to newly-converted Christians in India.

¹¹³ Stretton, *Women's Work for Children*, p. 4

¹¹⁴ Hesba Stretton, *Jessica's First Prayer*, Religious Tract Society, 1866, pp. 28-29.

¹¹⁵ Stretton, *Women's Work for Children*, pp. 12-13.

She reported back to England on the effect of reading the Bible and her own allegorical tales to an Indian audience, and referred specifically to the need for “Miss Sahibas”, alias young female missionaries. Wryly, and with a touch of sadness, she pointed to her own advancing years:

It was a Hindu mela; and not many Muhummadans seemed to be present, which made matters easier for us ... No one objected to hearing as much about the Blessed Saviour as we could tell them. Emily [another Zenana missionary] speaks Punjabi famously; I have only a thimble-full of it.

It was interesting to look at the faces when Emily told the story of the Prodigal Son. At this time her audience seemed to be principally Sikh men. They crouched on the ground around us, and listened with hearty hearts. Nowhere, either from men or women, did we meet with any rudeness ...

The way in which Batala is opening out is marvellous. I go from Zenana to Zenana, and have not by any means finished paying all my first visits! Our Biblewoman thinks that about thirty Zenanas are open to her. I doubt that nearly so many are open in the large mother-stations in Amritsar or Lahore. We ought to have two or three clever, strong and active Miss Sahibas here, instead of one elderly lady who is slow at both learning and teaching.¹¹⁶

Charlotte's books remained current and popular in England according to advertisements referring to the ‘indefatigable A.L.O.E’, appearing in the *Publishers' Circular*. Of greater contemporary significance were Charlotte's tales written in India which gave English readers detailed references to Indian phrases, religious practices, dress and custom. These, illustrated in tales such as *A Wreath of Indian Stories* and *Bullets from Batala*, presented readers with a series of short allegorical stories set in the Indian landscape, showing Christianity at work in the jewel of the Empire.¹¹⁷ In the preface to *A Wreath of Indian Stories*, she explained her rationale and put out a call for missionary donations:

The following stories have been written by A.L.O.E. since her arrival in India, for the use of native readers ... there are, comparatively speaking, hardly any writers who enjoy the advantages of having the peculiar habits and failings of Hindus, Mohammedans, Sikhs, and native converts, perpetually brought before their notice, as is, or should be, the case with a member of a missionary band

As stories placed in the hands of Oriental readers would be comparatively useless unless written in an Oriental style, and describing scenes and costumes familiar to natives, A.L.O.E. has tried to adopt such a style. When she reviewed her work, with the mental question, “What would be thought of this in England?” she felt how fanciful and affected her writings

¹¹⁶ CMT to Dorothea Hamilton, Batala, Nov. 15, 1877. Giberne, A.L.O.E, *The Life and Letters of Charlotte Maria Tucker*, pp. 272-3.

¹¹⁷ A few titles illustrate A.L.O.E's use of Indian references: *The Flower of India*, *Story of the Pink Chaddar*, *New Way of Eating Khas*, *The Two Pilgrims of Kashi*, *Jai Singh*, *the Brave Sikh and other Stories*. Within these tales, vernacular language was used and extensive footnotes provided translations and explanations.

might appear to European readers, and almost gave up the idea of sending them home.

And yet, as quaint and often grotesque ornaments brought from the East are not despised in Britain because they are unlike our own manufactures, but are sometimes even prized for their very quaintness, it is possible that a few of A.L.O.E.'s Oriental stories may not be unacceptable in her native land. They may even serve to awaken a little interest in a vast country like India, where a Native Church is struggling against surrounding evil influences—a Church as yet small compared with the myriads of its opponents, yet gaining strength year by year. That infant Church needs tender care and indulgence from those who have been brought up in a land bathed in the light of Christianity. ...¹¹⁸

A.L.O.E.'s versions of orientalism (and mercantilism) were sent directly from the periphery of Northern India to the heart of the metropolis and bore fruit immediately. As her Indian works were read in England, funds began to trickle through to the Zenana Missions.¹¹⁹ Through the proceeds of her writing, she donated money to two schools, the Baring High School for fee-paying converts, and the mission school, known as the "Plough School", for Indian boys 'not yet Christians'.¹²⁰ To both, Charlotte donated regular sums, although the "Plough School" where she taught older boys English language and history, received from her an annual sum of fifty pounds.¹²¹ The money came from Nelson's royalties and the proceeds from her 'tiny Indian booklets published by the Christian Literature Society at very low prices'. A.L.O.E.'s tales were then the most widely selling of the Society's productions.¹²²

Through other important outlets, A.L.O.E.'s Indian sketches for the Church Missionary Society's *Intelligencer and Record*, *The Gleaner*, and the *Indian Female Evangelist*, Charlotte's expounded her views on the state of missionary work, the role that committed missionary women and men played, and the effect of Christian enlightenment on a dark continent.¹²³ She was enough of a realist to know that not all conversions to Christianity were for the 'right' reasons—acknowledging the fact of 'rice Christians'—but her belief in the rightness of missionary effort particularly in the fields

¹¹⁸ *A Wreath of Indian Stories* by A.L.O.E. Thos. Nelson & Sons, London, 1876, Preface, pp. v-vi.

¹¹⁹ Charlotte wrote that a £5 donation had been received in September 1877, which prevented the closure on two village schools near Batala. She wrote, 'this handsome gift ... will keep the village schools going until April, and by this time, please God, others may send help.' Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

¹²⁰ The Baring High School was often in Charlotte's thoughts and was referred to in the heading used to open her biographical chapter in this thesis. The expectation was that the Baring School would be Batala's future 'Punjabi Eton or Harrow'. The boys had to pay 5 rupees per month in fees. *Ibid.*, p. 280.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 305.

¹²³ *The Indian Female Evangelist* was published in London by James Nisbet & Company.

of education and medicine, chimed with others similarly engaged in every corner of the British Empire.

Charlotte Maria Tucker was admittedly no “New Woman”, and many late nineteenth-century female writers and reformers would have rejected her approaches to life’s problems. And yet, her assertion of independence may rightly be seen as a move towards emancipation. A vote was probably not as important to her as personal autonomy. Her insistent demand for the right of single women to work inhibited by male missionaries in the fields of education and medical missions surely touches upon fundamental issues addressed by activists and suffragists back in England. A.L.O.E.’s concerns for Indian women, which might today be viewed by post colonial theorists as ‘matronising’ or controlling, focused attention at the time upon the ambiguous and difficult position of Indian women who chose to convert to Christianity or embrace Western traditions, particularly those who wished to be educated, employed, or treated by Occidental medicine.

Young girls could be educated with their parent’s permission in the Indian Female Normal schools, and widows were sought after as Bible women but Charlotte’s ideas for women converted ‘in middle life’, mainly reflected her own age and training. She suggested, for example, that unmarried converted women could be provided with native convert husbands, but that such women were usually “cast-off” wives, or women ‘deprived of home and maintenance’ by their families because they had chosen to be Christians. What is to be done? Her suggestions ranged from domestic service, lace and basket-making to stocking knitting, all of which, she agreed, were not solutions, especially for high-caste women, (a case which, in many respects, also applied to upper and middle-class women in England). Some young Indian women wanted to emulate their European counterparts: ‘The young maidens see that most female Missionaries whom they love and honour are unmarried. They enjoy freedom. Such [Indian] maidens do not wish to be married at all and say “I wish to remain *like you*”’.¹²⁴ A.L.O.E. asked her younger female colleagues to ‘make the subject of how female converts, and widows, may earn a decent livelihood, a matter of prayerful thought’,¹²⁵ an alternative to the legislative change sought by “New Women”!

A true representative of mid-to-late nineteenth-century evangelicalism, Charlotte Tucker wrote directly of the necessity for missionary work to continue to expand and embrace the native people. She felt it essential to convey a sense of urgency for the

¹²⁴ CMT to Dorothea Hamilton, July 13, 1885. Giberne, A.L.O.E, *The Life and Letters of Charlotte Maria Tucker*, p. 390.

¹²⁵ ‘A Difficult Question and a Subject for Prayer’, *Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol. V, 1880, p. 177.

missionary's work, to contradict any notion that missionary work was 'a failure, a vain expenditure of money and strength'. Writing as "A Lady of England", though by then known to be Miss C. M. Tucker, Charlotte undertook an advocacy role for the Zenana missions and for the sterling work of England's women. In almost every article she wrote, the topic of women's work for women emerged. She wrote on the qualities required from 'Those about to Become Missionaries'; she suggested ways women could make charitable donations - 'My trip to the Continent will cost at least twenty pounds, the Zenana Mission shall be two pounds richer'; on 'Our Work and the Workers', she illustrated the example set by English women that to inspire their Indian sisters. Addressing articles to the Girls' School Union—a potential source of "Miss Sahibas"—A.L.O.E. asked: 'If sister labourers in India are willing to give their lives to the labour, will the daughters of England refuse to supply the water needed?'¹²⁶

By comparison with her journalistic labours, A.L.O.E.'s output of fiction in India diminished, but only slightly. From 1875 when she arrived in Bombay until she died, fifteen books and more than forty short tales were written for her Indian and English readers. The Bishop of Lahore, Bishop Valpy French, acknowledged Batala as being an important centre of women's missionary work and Miss Tucker's work. There, he said, 'Miss Tucker, (so well known as A.L.O.E.) laboured with great devotion in visiting and in translation work'. The Bishop assisted her when she became gravely ill with malaria and accompanied her to church in her convalescence. She recalled: 'The dear Bishop drove up to the bungalow (Charlotte's home, Ghurub i Aftab), and took me himself to the church, through the *vestry*! This was a little act of consideration which I cannot forget.' She was pleased to receive such attention. Significantly, Bishop French's memorialist noted that 'the incident, perhaps, is trivial for record in a memoir, but trifles have so much to do with influence'.¹²⁷ Charlotte might have insisted modestly that she had no real influence. As she recorded in ~~the~~ epigraph to this chapter, she hoped that India's sons and daughters would 'show forth the power of Christianity "not only with their lips, but with their lives"'.¹²⁸ She devoted herself, however, to providing an influential example.

¹²⁶ A.L.O.E. contributed to the *Indian Female Evangelist* from her arrival in India in 1875. The articles cited represent only a small number of those she wrote. The selection here were written between 1876 and 1880. Copies are found in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The records of the Church Missionary Society and the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1872-1968, are deposited in the Library of the University of Birmingham, England. In addition to *The Indian Female Evangelist*, another periodical which I have not cited, *India's Women*, also held in the University of Birmingham, provides a rich and vital source of information.

¹²⁷ *The Life and Correspondence of Bishop Thomas Valpy French, First Bishop of Lahore*, Vol. 1, Rev. Herbert Birks, John Murray & Co., London, 1895, p. 395-6.

¹²⁸ "An Indian Sketch", Umritsar, Punjab. - From A.L.O.E. *Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol. III, 1877, p. 84.

A.L.O.E. put forward the inspiring face of missionary work: she spoke for and about women, and considered the children of future generations. Her voice in fiction and her factual accounts of work in India reached thousands of readers. For almost half a century she was heard, like her counterparts, in diverse quarters, adding her ideas to the 'muffled' voices and ideas expressed by other literary women who came to the public's attention.

¹ The Publishers' Circular, 15 January 1876, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 1.

² Ibid. p. 1.

³ John Harvey, *Thankless and Unforgotten: A Memoir of Mrs. A. L. O. E.* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1882), p. 10. The book is a biography of the author's life and work, and is a very interesting and valuable work.

Chapter VII

Graceful Exits: The 1890s

We can only suggest that the wants of the reading public are becoming more and more satisfied with newspapers, reviews, and magazines, and that authors consequently find their best market in the same field. ...

The decrease in the number of new books and new editions is very nearly as that recorded for 1889. In educational works and books for the amusement of the young we find higher figures. Of novels there are not quite so many as in 1889, and yet the reader of fiction has had provided for him almost three new novels *per diem*.

The Publishers' Circular, December 31, 1890.¹

Despite the *Publishers' Circular's* notice of decline, their analytical table for 1890 indicates that in the category of Novels, Tales, and Other Fiction, one thousand and forty new books were received, compared with six hundred and thirty in the category, Theology, Sermons, Biblical, etc.. In addition to other news on the state of publishing, the *Circular* advised that *Blackwood's Magazine* for the year would contain an 'attractive programme of contributors, including the ever-versatile Mrs Oliphant, Sir Theodore Martin, Miss E. Keary and other popular writers'. It also gave recent news of the whereabouts of one of England's best-loved story-tellers:

We are glad to learn that, instead of being ill, as was recently reported, Mr. R.L. Stephenson enjoys better health at present than he has had for years. Roaming about the South Seas agrees with him, and unlike most roamers, he is able to rove and write. He is writing some short stories, he has just got a novel out of hand and also published a book of ballads.

Few literary men can show a busier or more productive record.²

Few men or women could demonstrate busier or more productive writing records or philanthropic careers than Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Marie Tucker. In an address made to the House of Lords in 1870, Lord Shaftesbury alluded to the links between philanthropy and writing, and remarked that it was women rather than men who had written 'two-thirds of our tracts and nearly all our most interesting and effective stories'.³

¹ *The Publishers' Circular*, No. 1279, Vol. LIII, Dec. 31, 1890, p. 1648.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1649.

³ Brian Harrison, "Drunkards and Reformers: Early Victorian Temperance Tracts", *History Today*, XIII, 1963, p. 184, cited in Brian Harrison, 'Philanthropy and the Victorians', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. IX, No. 4, June 1966, p. 363.

It will be recalled that Lord Shaftesbury, one of England's most knowledgeable philanthropist politicians, had been greatly affected by Hesba Stretton's writing in the 1860s and 1870s, and equally, a number of Felicia Skene's influential friends, including university men and men of the church, had been influenced by her writing and ideas. By the 1890s however, with age overtaking, the days for these women to write 'interesting and effective stories' were numbered, and religious tracts had certainly passed out of fashion. But it may have been premature to write these authors off too briskly: the *Saturday Review* had wrongly predicted a demise in 1866. But like the literary genre of semi-religious fiction in which each had specialized, there was by 1890 evidence of decline, and each writer had expressed concerns privately about the persistence of *her* literary powers.

Hesba Stretton, one of the genre's leading practitioners, recognised the gradual decline in popularity of semi-religious fiction. She was, as we know, a careful and shrewd business woman: noticing a sea change in readers' tastes, she arranged with the Religious Tract Society in 1888 to receive a yearly payment in lieu of royalties. She noted in her Log Book that royalties were falling off badly and falling royalties meant falling sales. The Society took the opportunity to buy out her copyrights and with the help of new illustrators and typesetters, revamped her work. With a lump sum she was better able to invest and receive dividends on which she and her sister could live comfortably.

Extraordinary changes had taken place within the lifetimes of Stretton, Skene and Tucker in the delivery of philanthropy, in social reforms and in the business of publishing, all of which affected their *raison d'être*. Personal religious experience and beliefs were now openly questioned, not only by theologians and church men and women, but also by writers. This was evidenced by a relative explosion into the market of challenging novels of doubt and faith and dark works of social realism.⁴ The next

⁴ Three new writers provide examples of the outpouring. The most notable was George Gissing whose novels, *The Netherworld*, [1889] and *The Whirlpool*, [1897], provide prime examples of late nineteenth-century disillusionment. Constance Howell wrote a socialist novel, *A More Excellent Way*, Swan Sonnenschein & Co. London, [1888]. In this charity is castigated explicitly. 'Evangeline' and 'Otho' the socialistic heroine and hero, declare, "Children, in the present day, are always giving away their pence to some charitable object or other". "Charity," said Otho, "is a hateful thing. It is necessary under the present order of society ... but it is a hateful necessity. It demoralizes the giver and the receiver". *A More Excellent Way*, p. 155. Also, Margaret Harkness, Beatrice Webb's cousin who wrote under the name 'John Law', published a series of novels based upon social exploration: *A City Girl: A Realistic Tale*, [1887], *Out of Work*, [1888], *In Darkest London: A New and Popular Story of Captain Lobe*, *A Story of the Salvation Army*, [1889]. These writers avoided religion in their writing, although Margaret Harkness admired the secularised work of the Salvation Army. Margaret Harkness's novels, written under the pseudonym 'John Law', in some respects, followed Hesba Stretton's mode of explicit realism although Harkness had no particular love of the poor nor philanthropists. She described lady rent collectors in model housing schemes, (thinking perhaps of Octavia Hill and her own cousin, Beatrice) as "female despots", laws unto themselves, who worked under a system of "Petticoat Government". John Law', *A City Girl: A Realistic Story*, Vizetelly, London, 1887, p.

wave of social exploration fiction, unlike Hesba Stretton's, steered away from Christianity *per se* and provided new moral models of British socialism. Didacticism continued in other forms, reworked by writers in new styles and language, in novels, essays and reviews. If morality and religion had preoccupied Skene, Stretton and Tucker—radical conservatives—then new beliefs and secular codes attracted a coming generation of writers and activists. For example, Evangeline and Otho, the main characters of Constance Howell's idealistic novel of 1888, *A More Excellent Way*, suggest the breadth of change and thinking to philanthropy's protagonist, Miss Champneys:

Otho said, "I object that tales of poverty should be used to raise a pleasing glow of pity in the breasts of the rich. They make a luxury for themselves out of it; they are content that the poor should remain poor, in order that they may have the pleasure of pitying them. Such sympathy is sham sympathy." ... Miss Champneys heaved an exaggerated sigh. "It will be a clean sweep altogether", she said. "No charities? No almshouses? No hospitals I suppose? No bazaars got up for the destitute of the parish? No pity? No generosity? No Kindliness? "Oh", cried Evangeline, "don't make a mock of it like that! Can't you see that is is better not to have any poverty than for us to help the poor? And what is there to prevent kind feeling from remaining? There can still be presents of regard among equals".⁵

This was contemporary thought played out in fiction and, like semi-religious fiction, a form of propaganda.⁶ By no means dominant, it represented a growing school of thought already affecting the development of social policies and public philanthropy. At the same time, private philanthropy did not wither nor has the ethic disappeared, even in the last decade of the twentieth-century.

Frank Prochaska, an historian who has traced the development of nineteenth-century philanthropy and the women who contributed to the 'voluntary impulse', remarks upon the enormous sums which still flow through to private philanthropic institutions, despite the introduction of the "welfare state".⁷ Most Westernised nations now provide social security benefits and other safety nets designed to alleviate poverty and prevent individual hardships and women, professionals and voluntarists, are still deeply involved

10. Margaret Harkness is a rather enigmatic character and her novels deserve closer attention. A good short biographical account of her is found in the *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, J.M. Bellamy & J.M. Saville (eds.), Macmillan, London, 1987, pp. 103-113.

5 Howell, *A More Excellent Way*, p. 155. An interesting and ironic note is that Swan Sonnenschein's office was in Paternoster Square which had been the home of many religious publishing houses.

6 See, for example, Stephen Yeo's article, 'A NEW LIFE: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896', *History Workshop*, No. 4, Autumn, 1977, pp. 5-56.

7 F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*, Clarendon Press, 1980, and Frank Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain*, Faber & Faber, London, 1988.

in its provision. A recent set of Australian statistics show, for example, that women continue to make up the backbone of philanthropic societies and to perform most voluntary work.⁸ Are they 'busy-bodies', "female despots" or 'ineffectual angels of charity'? Obviously, the need for women's assistance still exists and continues to be given freely.⁹ 'Hand-outs' in what ever form are, however, as unpopular today as they have ever been. Many recipients have been grateful for charitable assistance but, like the nineteenth-century countrywoman who gladly accepted some red flannel from a local charity, still want to "wash the charity out of it".¹⁰

Felicia Skene understood such rejection; not all her charges accepted assistance, including the vagrants and tramps about whom she wrote so sensitively and humorously for *Belgravia* in 1893.¹¹ By the mid-1890s, Felicia Skene continued twice-weekly prison visiting, and she was still making small but regular donations to local charities,¹² but had moved away from novel writing to concentrate upon writing articles and short essays for popular and respected periodicals. In August 1896, at the age of seventy five, she wrote to Blackwood suggesting that time was running out, not only for her but also for the religious genre which had fallen into disfavour. Her diagnosis focused on growing religious scepticism, especially amongst the well-educated taken up with new scientific theories; in some way, she was right.

Younger writers, including her early protégé, Mrs Humphry Ward, had taken up where Felicia and her contemporaries were beginning to falter, although not without a

⁸ Precise figures have not been collected, and here I only use Australian figures as a guide, but Australian Bureau of Statistics figures collected for 1994, (100 years from the period under review), indicate that 21.3% of women aged over 15 years, compared with 16.7% of men in this age category, provided voluntary assistance to organisations providing aid of one type or another, foreign and domestic. Similarly, out of a population in the age group of 15 years and over, just under 14 millions, more than 2.5 million Australians performed voluntary work which includes 'charity' work. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Snapshot, *The Bulletin*, October 17, 1995, p. 38.

⁹ 'The Ineffectual Angel of Charity' in Sheila M. Smith, *The Other Nation: The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980, Chapter 4.

¹⁰ The full story reported by Brian Harrison, from a study by M.K. Ashby, referred to a women who accepted a length of red flannel from a local charity at Tysoe, 'but washed it thoroughly and hung it on her line. Asked by passers-by why she was washing the new flannel, she replied "Why, I bin washin' the charity out on it". M.K. Ashby, *Joseph Ashby of Tysoe, 1859-1919*, Cambridge, 1961, p. 46, cited by Brian Harrison, 'Philanthropy and the Victorians', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. IX, No. 4, June 1966, p. 370.

¹¹ F.M.F. Skene, 'The Autobiography of a Tramp', *Belgravia*, Vol. 81., 1893, pp. 167-179. This article consists of a conversation between Felicia and 'Dick Arch' and was conducted in a prison where he was serving a short sentence for vagrancy. She draws out his life story and he provides an explanation of his life on the road which the author treats with unsentimental sympathy. Felicia was concerned about the cost to the national system of 'the vast number of persons [who live] in this wholly unprofitable manner'. She was more concerned, however, with the care and education of vagrants' children and the children of prisoners.

¹² Records of the Oxford House of Refuge, the Charity Organisation Society, and St. Edwards School indicate regular payments from Miss Skene every year from 1879 onwards.

struggle. Felicia was anxious to counter the doubts expressed in such novels as *Robert Elsmere* which had set the nation, including William Gladstone, seriously talking. As John Sutherland observes, '[Gladstone saw] *Elsmere*'s repudiation of Anglicanism and Oxford (twin essences of Gladstonian Liberalism), ... as ominously symptomatic.' This, and other novels which questioned accepted orthodoxies were, in Gladstone's view, 'articulations of the corrosive new thinking that was destroying the fabric of Liberal England.'¹³ Hesba Stretton had repudiated Gladstone's politics and had herself listened to new ideas, but unlike some reformers, she never proposed a rejection of Christianity.

Felicia, suffering from the pain of seeing individuals reject what she regarded as the abiding comfort of faith and religion, wrote to Blackwood outlining an idea she considered would be a helpful treatise on immortality:

At my age I cannot expect to retain any literary power very much longer and I have a great desire that what may remain to me of working faculties should be made of some real use to others ... still if my last years might given to serve the Faith which has supported me through life I should be very thankful ...¹⁴

New theories, new religions, and new philanthropy challenged older ideas. Felicia Skene and her literary counterparts had believed explicitly in personal philanthropy even if it had to be organised, to some extent, institutionally.¹⁵ Beatrice Potter as she still was, a rising young woman, rejected their traditional approach; she was part of the coming generation of social welfare agents who gave deep thought to the faults of 'old-style' philanthropy: 'the spirit of unquestioning, of unrestricted—in short, of infinite—charity was, to the orthodox Christian, not a process by which a given end could be attained, but an end in itself—a state of mind—one of the main channels through which the individual entered into communion with the supreme spirit of love at work in the universe'.¹⁶ Only on the latter point would Felicia have agreed wholeheartedly, otherwise there was little common ground between the 'new' and the 'old'. The demands of new socio-scientific views of society, and Beatrice Potter's view of herself—a 'true

¹³ John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-eminent Edwardian*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990, p. 127.

¹⁴ Skene to Blackwood, letter, 5 Aug. 1896, *Blackwood Papers*, Incoming Correspondence, MS 4652, Folio 153, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

¹⁵ Of course, Hesba Stretton supported Dr. Barnardo's work which entailed homes organised along school lines, Felicia Skene supported the Industrial Home and Refuge in Oxford, and Charlotte Tucker had been part of the Ragged School movement and orphanages in India. None of them rejected organisation; what they insisted upon was individual communication between the giver and the receiver of philanthropy.

¹⁶ 'The World of Philanthropy', Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship*, Volume 1, 1938 Penguin edition, Harmondsworth, p. 225.

socialist'¹⁷ willing to sacrifice the individual to the community—would have been abhorrent to a woman like Felicia who, for the most part, regarded a heart-to-heart or at least a *tête-à-tête*, as an essential element of philanthropy.

Not a Fall but Merely a Decline - Old-Fashioned Writers and Publishing

From India, Charlotte Maria Tucker had little cause to contact her publisher, Thomas Nelson, to discuss copyrights, terms, or distribution of her books. The relationship appeared unproblematic to both writer and publisher and, if many letters were exchanged over the years, the devastating fire in Nelson's premises in 1878 — “not a book or sheet of paper was saved”— and the fire-bombs of the second world war, destroyed them.¹⁸ A.L.O.E. had always been a solid backstop in the company's lists which grew by a further tale year by year—A.L.O.E.'s Library was how Nelson's advertised her work. Diminishing returns were similarly not a problem. Charlotte relied upon the good offices of Nelson's in London and Edinburgh to keep up supplies of her books to her for distribution to friends and pupils in Batala, and further afield. As we know, she paid for her own books and arranged for cheaper and cheaper editions to be printed—not action of an author ambitious for profits—simply the wish of an author ambitious for readers.

A.L.O.E., along with her contemporary, the popular philanthropic writer, R.M. Ballantyne (1825-1894),¹⁹ and the younger Evelyn Everett-Green (1856-1932), were the publisher's fictional mainstays.²⁰ Nelson's bought their authors' works outright when manuscripts were accepted so there were no tricky questions about copyright or royalties, no follow-up negotiations, no accounts and no losses.²¹ A.L.O.E. remained faithful to

¹⁷ March 1887, *The Diary of Beatrice Webb*, Volume One, 1873-1892, *Glitter Around and Darkness Within*, Edited by Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, Virago, London, 1986, p.197.

¹⁸ William Nelson described the fire at Hope Park in 1878. His description is cited in Alistair McCleery, Thomas Nelson & Sons, *British Literary Publishing Houses 1820-1880*, Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 106, Gale Research Inc., Detroit, London, p. 221.

¹⁹ Robert Mitchell Ballantyne was nephew of the printer/publisher, Ballantyne, Sir Walter Scott's partner until his bankruptcy in 1826. R.M. Ballantyne wrote popular boy's adventure fiction and was an inveterate researcher, undertaking feats and journeys as background for his fiction - founded on facts. His novel, *The Lifeboat* [1864], was written to raise money for the National Lifeboat Institution. See entry, John Sutherland, *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction*, pp.39-40

²⁰ Nelson's made greater profits from educational text books and atlases; although fiction represented 40 percent of the books, they produced they returned only 10 percent of the profits. McCleery, Thomas Nelson & Sons, *British Literary Publishing Houses 1820-1880*, p. 221.

²¹ Thomas Nelson & Sons continued this practice and, in the process, lost Ballantyne who went to James Nisbet who allowed Ballantyne to retain copyright. Nelson's refused to sell copyrights of his work back to Ballantyne and the titles they retained remained best-sellers. However, Ballantyne went on to write eighty stories for Nesbit, retain his copyright, and receive royalties. McCleery, *ibid.*, pp. 220-221. Nelson's confined their philanthropy to those outside publishing!

Nelson's; their reward was consistency from a trusted writer and regular returns. Her reward was knowing that their book distribution at home and across the world ensured that her evangelical message was transmitted to a wide readership. After the passage of Forster's Education Act in 1870 which expanded the provision of elementary education for the young, (and seemed to favour Anglican religious schools), A.L.O.E.'s books, like Hesba Stretton's, were offered as prizes and rewards within the burgeoning school board system in Britain, and were widely available through Nelson's outlets in North America.

Though never wa vering from her evangelical mission, A.L.O.E. was able to change her writing to suit demand and often used historical and geographical knowledge as a basis for her literary themes, although she did take up a number of contemporary issues. For example, *The Spanish Cavalier*, published in 1874, was not a swash-buckling romance but a tale set in Seville in 1873 during the time of revolutionary insurrection and civil war. The central character, Aguilera, was based upon a real Don Aguilera who, with other Spanish missionary evangelists, successfully calmed a mob intent on executing members of the ruling Junta. A.L.O.E. closed with a chapter entitled 'Fiction and Truth'. She was noted for her use of prefaces to give information to her readers, and this occasion wrote: 'Here closes my story, but not my work. The information which some writers might have put into a preface, I have purposely reserved, as the choicest part of my volume, for its conclusion'. She spoke directly to readers about the events which had inspired the book, referring to reports and *Occasional Papers* published in 1873 by the Spanish Church Mission, and she used this opportunity to discuss the persecution of Spanish Protestants and the activities of the Spanish Reformed Church.²² She was, as John Sutherland suggests, a surprisingly versatile writer who was willing to use current events to 'express her philanthropy in print'.²³

Such contemporaneity as A.L.O.E. could muster in later years was not sufficient to keep her books at the top of booksellers' lists. While her sales may have declined—there is no way of judging this precisely—she retained enough everyday knowledge of the publishing industry to advise others. In a letter from Simla dated June 1892, she forwarded thanks for a book, *The Life of Dr. Duff*, translated into Bengali and offered some useful advice to the author, Miss Raikes:

²² A.L.O.E. referred to two *Occasional Papers*, one published in 1873 by the Spanish Evangelical Mission whose headquarters were in Duke Street, London, and one by the Spanish Church Mission received as A.L.O.E.'s book was in the press. *The Spanish Cavalier: A Story of Seville* by A.L.O.E., T. Nelson & Sons, London, Edinburgh and New York, 1875, pp. 291-298.

²³ Sutherland, *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction*, p. 641.

If I have neglected thanking you for a copy of your translation, pray forgive an aged and half worn-out Missionary; I am seventy-one, and in weak health. ... At Simla, however, where I am on a visit, I hear that there are Bengalis, and I might find some to whom I could present the book, which has been your labour of love.

I cannot but hope that you have not published 2000 copies at your own expense; I never do; but a Society prints, and takes the risk. If the Bengalis be like the Panjabis [sic], it will be difficult to sell so many copies at 8 annas each. If I remember rightly, my little *Life of Duff* only cost 2 annas; and our people think that a good deal! ²⁴

This letter was written a year before her death. Her decline was chiefly in health rather than enthusiasm for her mission work and writing. There was never a hint that her manuscripts were unwelcome and it seems likely that Nelson's corresponded with her, as they did with educationalists at home and abroad, seeking ways to answer particular needs. By the 1890s, modernized, mechanized and commercially active, Thomas Nelson sold vast quantities of educational books throughout the British Empire even though on certain issues, they remained almost as old-fashioned as some of their most trusted writers. According to McCleery's account, Nelson's parted company with Evelyn Everett-Green in 1893 because of the 'moral aspects of her work'.²⁵ The editors objected to Everett-Green's portrayal of kissing—this particular subject and the author's lapse was something unheard of and unseen in A.L.O.E.'s moral tales.

In the same year, 1893, Charlotte Maria Tucker finally parted company with her publishers. Her last page of diary, shown overleaf, reveals the last effort to maintain contact with her beloved Zenanas. Thin and fragile and worn out after suffering from a long bout of bronchitis, "A Lady of India" ceased her labours and died in Amritsar where her missionary sisters had taken her to be nursed. She died on Wednesday, 29 November, having issued instructions for her burial: no-one was to shed tears, no-one was to wear mourning apparel, her own funeral hymn which she had composed was to be sung in Urdu, and she was to be carried to her grave on a native chapai or stretcher, covered with a white chaddah, and buried without a coffin. Her instructions were that her funeral expenses should amount to no more than five rupees.

In 1876, Charlotte Tucker thanked Sir William Muir, then President of the Church Missionary Society, for his note of sympathy on the death in London of her 'precious brother', Henry Carre Tucker: 'Henry was the only member of my family whom I consulted before coming to a final decision regarding engaging in mission-work'. She

²⁴ CMT to Miss Raikes [possibly a descendant of Robert Raikes, of Sunday School fame], June 20, 1892. Giberne, *The Life and Letters of A.L.O.E.*, p. 485. A.L.O.E.'s version of the *Life of Dr. Duff* was one of her tales published in India.

²⁵ McCleery, Thom Nelson & Sons, *British Literary Publishing Houses, 1820-1880*, p. 221.

continued, 'It is sweet to me to know that my Henry not only sanctioned my coming to India, but expressed himself as "delighted" at my doing so. His heart was much much in mission work'.²⁶ From her diary, shown below, her heart also remained in her mission.

- November.
8. Hosseina Kumbhar. Luke V. gave husband very small book
Jhandu
Bearing's wife. Not Arab woman. real Nain.
Amiri B.
Achri Munsif. very nice. Lent him Mr Mitchell to Indian youth.
Lata of Robert, and Indor.
9. VILLAGE. Purian. Gave Jis new-born kurta. Heard Punna &
Jhandu Lila Prager, Wuhme-Bag Gurmukhi listenat well. So did
Lena's Lili. Gave Sacto to Prager - only reader. Bibis ended.
Pon her Mr COLEMAN came to be nursed. Mark 1.
10. Khapuris Umri, fair.
Do Barakat. nice. Gave her Gospel. (Chiefly Luke VII.
Amuman. as usual. Has lost 2 babies. Menasles.
Firoz Din. don't go again this year.
Bhan ki Ma. Gave "Hindu Widows" and "Sects" to pleasing R
whose father is, I think, Pakwar at Purian.
11. Too unwell to work.
12. Sunday. Boys' class. 2 houses.
13. Village Chd. 8 girls. pleased with knowledge of tests
LENT Beli xabar. Few Hindu bibis, but the one who did not
go to Prager pleased me. I asked Bibis if they would be afraid
if they knew that they would die tomorrow. They hesitated, but
this one said, "I should not be afraid for I should go to
the Lord Jesus."
- 14-15. Too poorly to work. Mr Coleman leaves us.

THE LAST PAGE OF A.L.O.E.'S DIARY

Plate 28: A.L.O.E.'s diary, November 1893.²⁷

²⁶ CMT to Sir William Muir, Amritsar Mission, Jan. 28, 1876. ALS, (Shelfmark Dk.2.13, p.26), Special Collections, Edinburgh University Library, Edinburgh.

²⁷ This facsimile appears in Giberne's biography. The original is lost.

A.L.O.E. had undertaken her mission independently, but not as an act of defiance—her brother's sanction was always important. But it was also an act of faith between herself and her Maker. As a writer she had always found inspiration in the allegorical journey in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Like the Evangelical hero, Christian, she refused to accept that death was final, believing, like Felicia Skene, that immortality was the Christian's reward. To Sir William she wrote: 'I will not say death - for the Christian never dies'.²⁸ For A.L.O.E., death was merely a preface.

The last piece of writing by Felicia Skene was on the subject of immortality. The idea for the treatise, *A Test of the Truth: An Argument for Immortality*, she had discussed in a letter with John Blackwood in 1896. It was published by Elliot Stock in London in 1897. Confiding in Blackwood 'as a true friend', she sought his counsel and offered him her private reasons for wanting to write. She said that at 'this university'—Oxford—, 'the increase in scepticism [is] culminating in the entire abandonment of all moral and religious principle'. The facts, she said, had been forced painfully upon her: 'I have put down some rough notes on that object, but I have left them not in a fit form for publication because I doubt my ability to grapple with an evil which so many wiser writers have failed to meet effectively. ... I cannot myself be a judge of my own powers—but I trust to you implicitly'.²⁹

Blackwood responded positively to the idea but offered no promise that he would publish such a work, or at least, not before she had completed another task which he thought more important and infinitely more saleable:

I myself, like you, have been deeply impressed by the rapid increase in scepticism, culminating, as you wisely say, in the entire abandonment of all moral and religious principle not only in the universities, but in society at large. As to your heart's desire to grapple with that evil even tho' you may fail to meet it effectively, my feeling is that you should endeavour to put those notes into suitable form for publication. On having done that, I certainly think you should carry out the writing of your own reminiscences. ... I should say the life history first as I am pretty confident from the mark your other two papers have made that they would have, in volume form along with the account of your own work in Life, a certain successful sail [sic].³⁰

²⁸ CMT to Muir, Jan. 28, 1876.

²⁹ Felicia Skene to Blackwood, Aug. 5, 1896, Incoming Correspondence, MS 4652, folios 152-153, *Blackwood's Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

³⁰ William Blackwood to Felicia Skene, Aug. 29, 1896, Correspondence Book, p. 156, MS 30383, *Blackwood's Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. The two previous papers referred to are 'Glimpses of Some Vanished Celebrities' and 'Some Episodes in a Long Life' published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1895 and early 1896, both of which are referred to in earlier chapters and the bibliography.

Further correspondence was exchanged and during that period, Felicia submitted an article, *A Noble Life*, about the life of her sister, Caroline Rangabé, who had married a Greek diplomat. Events in Greece and Turkey were of great concern and she mentioned her two nephews in the Greek Army and suggested that the article, since it dealt with Modern Greece, would be of special interest. Blackwood did not publish her treatise. Her letters show that she went ahead to produce what she described as 'a little book "*A Test of the Truth*"' which she subsequently sent to him as a gift, proof that she had taken his advice. She was anxious not to be known as the writer of the 'little book', but wrote to Blackwood: 'I do not wish to have any secret from you'.³¹

The treatise was published under the pseudonym "Oxoniensis" and presented a clearly written, if polemical, prose essay advocating faith. It argues vehemently that atheism and scepticism are destructive forces, a refinement of earlier thoughts expressed in her novel, *Through the Shadows: A Test of the Truth*, written in 1888.³² This was a long novel into which Felicia wove another heroine and her theories on a number of social and moral issues, including mental health, psychological phenomena, anti-vivisection, the ownership of private property, philanthropy, loss of faith, the settlement movement, social and religious hypocrisy, death, suicide, capital punishment and women's mission. Her preface opened with the third stanza of Matthew Arnold's poem, "Dover Beach":

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like folds of a bright girdle fur'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.³³

Arnold's melancholy tone resonated with Felicia's fears for future generations deprived of a firm belief in God and the mystery of life, the divinity of man and eternal life. New philosophers and novelists were held responsible for youth's growing scepticism: 'No one at the present time can escape the obtruding influence of rationalistic Agnosticism. Its voice is borne to us through every channel that can reach our consciousness; it pervades the literature of the day in endless variety of expression—from the strong utterances of those who maintain that to destroy the ancient faiths is to uphold the truth, down to the shallow supercilious Atheism which mingles with novel-writer's

³¹ Felicia Skene to Blackwood, July 15, 1897, Incoming Correspondence, MS 4666, folios 189-190, *Blackwood's Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

³² The treatise adopted a significant portion of the novel's title and might well have exposed her as the author behind the pen-name.

³³ Matthew Arnold, "On Dover Beach", 1851.

visions of romance'.³⁴ Felicia approached her topic not as a novelist nor as a journalist, but as a theologian.

Unlike Felicia, Hesba Stretton spent the last decade of the nineteenth-century in semi-retirement. She continued to write, although more sporadically; since there was no need to live by the pen, she produced no new articles. The last were for the *Sunday Magazine*, 'The Acrobat's Girlhood' in 1889, and 'The Half Brothers' in 1892. In 1891, she turned her attention to collecting money for famine relief in Russia. She wrote to Florence Nightingale to enlist her support, and in her Log Books recorded writing to *The Times*: 'My letter in The Times, asking for funds for Russian Famine'. In 1894, in collaboration with Serge Stepniak, she produced a book, *Paul Rodents*, published by Cassell and Company in New York and London. Her log book tells little about the process of writing, but does show her sense of business:

Jan 1894 - I wrote the Russian story every day.

March 1894 - great bother about Russian story. Cassell's have it and will not decide whether they will keep it.

April/May 1894 - Stepniak says our story was so religious he could not have his name put to it. He went at once to Cassell's, who made him write to them direct. They agreed not to put his name; but they have put eight asterisks on the title page, which is more attractive. Appleton's of New York cable they will not have the book with Stepniak's name; so we shall lose the American copyright.³⁵

Cassell's published *Paul Rodents*, complete with asterisks, and it sold in the United States as well as Britain. Hesba was clearly still anxious about contractual arrangements but this did not prevent her from writing another short novel in 1894 for the Religious Tract Society entitled *The Highway of Sorrow*, and one last Russian story, *In the Hollow of His Hand*, about the persecution of Russian Stundists [Baptists]. In 1896, she and her sister Lizzie left the comfort of their home on Ham Common and travelled to Switzerland in May. Theological questions on immortality did not trouble Hesba while she retained the capacity to participate in current debates, and she only wrote when she felt compelled.

1899 was the Religious Tract Society's centenary year — Hesba Stretton, they noted, had been one of 'their writers' from early 1860s. In the Society's celebratory publication, *The Story of the Religious Tract Society for One Hundred Years*, Samuel Green, the Society's memorialist, noted that Hesba Stretton was 'a gifted author ... happily still among us'. 'This author', he asserted, had 'stirred innumerable hearts of old

³⁴ Oxoniensis, [F.M.F. Skene], *A Test of the Truth*, Elliot Stock, London, 1897, p. 6.

³⁵ *Log Book* 1894. Entries are sporadic and dates are incomplete.

and young'. From her pen had come *Jessica's First Prayer*, *Little Meg's Children*, *Pilgrim Street*, *Alone in London*, and he concluded, 'these and others from the same pen, and the interest awakened by them in the condition of the poor and outcast children, has borne good fruit to the present day.'³⁶ In retrospective view, this was a fine testimonial from a publisher who had displeased Hesba and was forced to make adjustments to suit her fame and her financial needs. The Society, of course, was the ultimate winner. They bought all her copyrights and were still publishing some of her work into the early twentieth century. A glance at her published works in the complete bibliography in this thesis indicates the extent of the Religious Tract Society's commercial admiration for her work.

The Society claimed a special role in publishing—'the societies' Society', they called themselves —'without it, other societies could not do their work'. The memorialist found comfort in the fact that 'thousands of little ones had found enjoyment from the attractive Christian volumes which had been issued by the Society'.³⁷ As a result of their outstanding commercial success, Hesba had managed to live and save by her pen.

If you dip a woman's finger in the inkpot, she will go on writing for ever! ³⁸

Working oneself to death is a commonplace phrase though not usually associated with writers. Writers—men of letters with well-stocked libraries—have often been depicted in literature and history as creative souls with sufficient time to think and write. Grub Street hacks and literary handmaidens of the church do not conjure the same image. Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker, writing from their own homes, paced themselves as carefully as they could but, like all freelancers, had to write on demand or have material continually ready to offer for publication. Burning the midnight oil was not unusual. Hesba Stretton managed to devise a routine; waking at eight, breakfast in bed brought by Lizzie, start writing at ten and stop at one for a light lunch and then a walk. Write again until half-past four and then stop for the day. The same routine was followed throughout her writing life.

Charlotte Maria Tucker wrote from the family's dining room table or from a desk in her room, interrupted by children, relatives and callers. She got up early, before dawn, often in the freezing cold, to glean extra hours before family routines encroached.

³⁶ Samuel G. Green, D.D. *The Story of the Religious Tract Society for One Hundred Years*, Religious Tract Society, 1899, p. 79.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 206-7.

³⁸ Douglas Jerrold, quoted in *The Publishers' Circular*, Dec. 31, 1874, Vol. XXXVII, p. 1166.

In India, she had more freedom (and no freezing mornings), but her missionary work came before writing, and she often wrote only during the breaks taken for vacations in the hills to escape the summer's heat. She wrote quickly and systematically, as her letters to Nelson's reveal: one book in progress, one at the printers, another at the 'ideas' stage. Stamina and determination helped produce A.L.O.E.'s extraordinary output of writing.

Felicia Skene accepted all work: translations, editing, proof-reading, in addition to her own writing. This literary work was squeezed into the hours left free between prison visiting, church services, tutoring at St. Edwards,³⁹ and social calls. When editing the *Churchman's Companion*, she often stayed up through the night to complete the journal or work on her own novels and papers.⁴⁰ In the year of her death in 1899, she wrote to Blackwood acknowledging payment for her last article 'Louise-Ulrique; Queen of Sweden': 'I think this is the last payment I shall ever have for writing—I think I am written out'.⁴¹ It was not the last payment—she received payment from the *Century Magazine* of New York for an article on Sir Walter Scott's first love. Her correspondence with Blackwood indicates an enormous capacity for work; she often referred to proofs which she had corrected overnight on receipt and returned to Edinburgh by the fast mail. This she kept up until her final year. She had offered herself as a replacement to 'dear Mrs Oliphant' in October 1897, a few months after the writer's death in June. She tackled Blackwood obliquely about the third volume of the *William Blackwood and His Sons: The Annals of a Publishing House*, having received the first two volumes as a gift from the publisher. She thanked him effusively for his extraordinary kindness and consideration:

I feel that I have been such an insignificant contributor to *Maga* ... I have only had time to read your introduction, and the index of both volumes, which sufficiently tells me how intensely interesting I shall find the contents — I hope I may see the third volume — one cannot help wishing so much that the dear Mrs Oliphant might herself have done so — but it is a noble work to done at the close of her wonderful literary career.⁴²

Acknowledging Mrs. Oliphant's long and successful career, Felicia must have understood the physical and mental costs of producing novel after novel, year after year. That writer had almost worked herself to breaking point to support her sons. Felicia had never carried such a burden, although part of her payments were usually diverted to one

³⁹ St. Edward's records indicate that Miss Skene was a regular visitor to sick boys as well as an occasional tutor. A memorial window was suggested in 1899. The records note that she 'turned the first sod, contributed largely to its funds ... and was a familiar figure for many years to the school.' St. Edward's Records, Per GA Oxon 4169, folio 19, 1899, Bodleian Library, Oxford. (I am grateful to Professor Bill Mandle who found and kindly passed this information on to me.)

⁴⁰ Rickards, *Felicia Skene at Oxford*, p. 96.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 336. The article appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in Vol. 164, September 1898.

⁴² Felicia Skene to Blackwood, Oct. 10, 1897, MS 4666, folios 197-198, Incoming Correspondence, *Blackwood's Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

cause or another.⁴³ Not knowing but hoping that she might be chosen an alternative author, she offered her services again to Blackwood in 1898:

I have often wished so much that I could have helped you with the third volume of the wonderful book on the House of Blackwood now that dear Mrs. Oliphant is gone, but I suppose it is already complete and that in any case my ambition to help on it, would have been always out of the question.⁴⁴

In the months before she died, she was busy assisting her friend, Lady Mabel Howard, with an article she was preparing for *Blackwood's*, and she was helping Charles Wood of the *Argosy* by examining manuscripts for him. One week before her death she had examined and despatched five manuscripts.⁴⁵ Her friends were alarmed at her state of health and her insistence on working so diligently. Finally and suddenly, her heart failed and she died in her home on 6 October 1899.

“To My Friends, Known and Unknown”—this was the leading title to Hesba’s last published work, *Thoughts on Old Age: Good Words from Many Minds*. Published by the Religious Tract Society in 1906, it was Hesba’s selection of the thoughts of sages and thinkers on the prospect of ageing and death. Her log books had long since been neglected but the preface to this work, while not maudlin, is revealing. She had suffered from a stroke and had been cared for by her sister and a companion from the end of the century. These words were dictated: ‘I offer them to you in legible type, more easily read than my handwriting’. In July of 1906, having turned seventy four, she had decided to look into the philosophy of her own life by looking at what others had written about theirs. Seemingly, she had collected fragments during her working life, ‘for my own pleasure and instruction only’. In offering these to her “friends”, her readers, new and of old-standing, she revealed for the first time public insights into herself and her views. It was ironic but perhaps, safe, to indulge in self-reflection when there were few years remaining and few old friends left to contradict her voice.

In bringing Hesba’s life to its final conclusion, a biographer grasps for these gems. Hesba wrote with quiet acceptance and optimism:

-
- ⁴³ Charles Wood, editor of the *Argosy* for whom Felicia was worked just before her death commented upon her charitable donations: With an income that her charities made more and more limited, she yet gave away so largely that she was supposed to be wealthy. For the sake of others she had so lessened her fortune that at the time of her death she had scarcely more than sufficient yearly income to meet the requirements of her modest household. Rickards, *Felicia Skene at Oxford*, p. 366. This is borne out in the estate mentioned in her will. See below for details.
- ⁴⁴ Felicia Skene to Blackwood, Feb. 8, 1898, MS 4681, folios 94-95, Incoming Correspondence, *Blackwood's Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.
- ⁴⁵ Rickards, *Felicia Skene at Oxford*, p. 338.

There seems to me great peace and tranquility in having finished one's work of youth and middle life, and having no more to do save wait for the last conflict, if it be one.

The greatest sorrow of old age, and it is very heavy, is when the heart says, 'All are gone, the old familiar faces'. This must be the lot of very old people. It is true solitude; and when there is no consciousness of a divine, unseen Friend, how great is that solitude!

For myself, I find old age, as every other age, brings a cup mingled with Earth's bitterness and Heaven's sweetness; only now the bitterness passes quickly away, as it did in my childhood, while the sweetness ensures and increases. This world gives us no perfect day.

Our Lord has passed through this life as we do; 'entering by the gate of birth, and passing through the gates of death'; whereby He has opened the gates of heaven to all believers.

We old people are waiting to pass through those mysterious gates, looking back upon our long pilgrimage, and forward upon meeting our Lord.

This is the offering I can give, 'I give a patient God my patient heart.'

HESBA STRETTON,

June 1906.

Hesba Stretton died in her home at Ham Common on the 8 October, 1911, without her lifelong companion, her older sister Lizzie. Lizzie died in February 1911 and for the first time, Hesba was without her support and friendship. They always spoke of themselves as "we" throughout the Log Books—who *was* talking? Elizabeth Smith was an individual with a distinct identity who preferred to run their home according to their own likes and dislikes. She was chatelaine to her active sister. They conferred on all matters of business, they travelled together, they shared the care of their nieces and nephews and, according to one account, even dressed alike. Their sisterly relationship was recognised by an obituarist with a reference to its precious qualities, placing it higher than the relationship of marriage.

It serves as a significant reminder that Skene, Stretton and Tucker all had, and relied upon, the support of their sisters. Hesba and Lizzie, separated by eight months in death, lie together in their grave at St. Andrews, near Ham Common:

The most devoted companionship of husband and wife was, in duration and completeness, not to be compared with the actually life-long attachment and comradeship between the sisters. It will readily be understood that the death of the elder in February last was a sundering of such close ties that the younger was not likely long to survive.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Hesba Stretton: Memoir, *The Sunday At Home*, 1911, pp. 121-125.

Postscripts

Obituaries can be misleading. Like Victorian hagiography, only the best appears and those who knew individuals well recall other sides of personality, foibles as well as aspirations. "The death is announced", provides unemotional preface to lives lived. *The Publishers' Circular* announced A.L.O.E.'s death thus: 'The death is announced at Amritsar, in the Punjab, of Miss Tucker, better known as A.L.O.E. Miss Tucker's works have enjoyed a large circulation'. The *Graphic* announced: 'She was a well-known a quarter of a century ago as the author of many books inculcating religion and morality, and had a very large circle of readers'. *The Times* stated: 'As an authoress, Miss Tucker was known by a pseudonym to a large class of readers. [Her books] ... were more popular ten or twenty years ago than they are to-day, though some of them deserve to be, and are, still, read. Her pleasant easy style made her writings attractive to children, for whom most of them were intended'.⁴⁷

The Times provided a fine obituary with a concise outline of Felicia Skene's life and her writing, noting her book, *Hidden Depths* as 'perhaps the most powerful, embodying her singular and sympathetic acquaintance with and experience among women of the criminal classes'. William Tallack wrote a moving piece for the *Daily News*. He acknowledged her as a writer but wrote mostly of her as a prison philanthropist. Of significance was a reference to a visit paid to Miss Skene in connection with her rescue work with prostitutes in Oxford, as well as talks with the Chancellor of the University about undergraduates: 'But at about the same time, a lady, of the 'new woman' type, visited Miss Skene in order to rebuke her sharply for interfering with the "liberty" of the unfortunate class alluded to'.⁴⁸ There were others, in Oxford's newspapers, which detailed Felicia's work and noted the service, the flowers, the impressive calibre of mourners, and the gravesite.⁴⁹

Wills provide a economic picture of independence, of estate, belongings, finances, bequests and, often, they contain loving references to relatives, friends and servants. These women, Skene, Stretton and Tucker made money from their writing but not fortunes. They gave money away but also retained money for personal luxuries.

⁴⁷ *Publishers' Circular*, Dec. 30, 1893, No. 1435, p. 749. *Graphic*, Jan. 6, 1894, p.6. *The Times*, Dec. 29. 1893.

⁴⁸ *The Times*, Oct. 10, 1899. *Daily News*, Oct. 14, 1899.

⁴⁹ Rickards noted at the funeral relatives and friends, and 'men distinguished as heads of colleges, professors and high officials both of the university and the prison, and of many charitable institutions at which she had been so well known'. She also noted amongst the flowers a card, 'written in an uneducated hand, "From Anne S——. to the one I love"'. An admirer, a servant, or, perhaps, someone whom Felicia had assisted? Rickards, *Felicia Skene at Oxford*, p. 342.

None were *grande dames* of charity and their fortunes, such as they were, were expended essentially on small donations to favoured charities and family members. Only A.L.O.E. gave away her home to the Zenana Mission. Felicia's possessions, her manuscripts, books and her infamous parrot 'Aurora', were distributed amongst family members, all to be eventually lost. Only Hesba's Log Books found their way back to Shropshire and have, in consequence, opened up a small window on the evangelical world of publishing and her social life.

What has remained are often less tangible legacies—all those readers and others who were affected by these writers' accounts of life, death, happiness, and redemption, and by their works. Many of Hesba Stretton's readers, even into the twentieth century, have recalled the graphic images she put into their minds—E.S. Nesbitt, Herbert Read, Augustus John, George Sturt, M.V. Hughes—all left some account of the affectiveness of her writing. The people of Church Stretton in Shropshire placed a commemorative tablet and stained glass window, "Jessica's Window", in the Church of St. Lawrence.⁵⁰ Felicia's friends, including the Chancellor of the University of Oxford, placed a brass tablet in the north transept of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, Felicia's church after St. Thomas the Martyr. The inscription was written in Latin by the President of Magdalen, Thomas Herbert Warren:

In Affectionate Memory
of Felicia Mary Frances Skene
Born at Aix en Provence, A.D. 23 May 1821, taken at death at
Oxford, 6 October, 1899

the daughter of James Skene of Rubislaw

Who whilst she lived her childish years at Edinburgh, spent the flower of her youth among the Greeks at Athens, having moved from the North to this same city of Cecrops. Afterwards when events had brought her parents to Oxford, on their deaths she remained here, and by then become *a woman in control of her own destiny*, so gave herself to the women of Oxford that for many years she gave food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, visited the sick, assiduously came to countless shut in prison.

Not unmindful of the Word of God.⁵¹

A.L.O.E. lies, as far as is known, in a grave in Amritsar in the churchyard of the Church of the Epiphany. Her grave may be unmarked unless, after her death, ignoring her instructions for a five rupee burial to encourage native Christians not to spend excessively on funeral celebrations, her Zenana sisters arranged for a headstone. Her

⁵⁰ Coloured slides of these are in my possession, unfortunately not clear enough for reproduction.

⁵¹ I am grateful to Dr. John Tillotson, Reader, Department of History, The Faculties, Australian National University, Canberra, for translating for me. My italics have been added for emphasis.

grave may be difficult to find—it would be worth the journey—so that a woman who went to India to find her life and undertake a mission does not lie, forgotten.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Legacies

But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.¹

It would be foolhardy to claim for Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker undue historical importance; their influence was of a kind 'incalculably diffusive'. And yet it would be unhistorical to ignore the kinds of philanthropic work and literary voices which so many Victorians thought authoritative and important. By forgetting this fact we might be accused of deliberately refusing their small but historic legacies in the field of reform. Reconsidering the lives of these women has not been undertaken to enshrine them in 'literary halls of fame' nor in other hallowed places. Rather, in considering the significance and meaning of individual lives, the aim has been to register their existence and to reconceive their working and imaginative worlds. Fiction and the moral imagination are powerful forces, and these successful Victorian writers and philanthropists endeavoured to harness such powers in order to act, as another writer suggests, in the role of 'optimistic agents of salvation'.²

Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker gained substantial ground in a society which, despite its traditional respect for female philanthropy, expressed deep misgivings when contemporary women began to speak out. Many were prepared only grudgingly to acknowledge the importance and impact of women's mission. Women such as Skene, Stretton and Tucker, working individually or in groups, were permitted a place to work, but often in hidden and unobtrusive spaces, and from these sheltered positions voice challenging opinions.

George Eliot, the most perceptive English novelist of her day, understood the multiple forces that such women withstood to combat prejudice in order to "do good", to be useful, to live faithfully and attempt to improve the lives of those around them.

¹ George Eliot, regarding the life of Dorothea Brooke, *Middlemarch*, 1871-72, Penguin edition, London, 1965, p. 896.

² Rosie Scott, 'Fiction and the Moral Imagination', *Australian Book Review*, No. 139, April 1992, pp. 26-31.

El iot's fictional heroine, Dorothea Brooke, chose to marry to find a satisfactory role in life; Skene, Stretton and Tucker, contemporary Victorians, decided to remain single and fulfill their ambitions independently. The threads of these individual lives reveal a pattern incorporating many others working towards similar ends, some using fiction, others prose, still others never writing, but nevertheless all engaged in diverse benevolent enterprises. As Baroness Burdett-Coutts noted in *Woman's Mission* in 1893:

It is impossible not to be deeply impressed by the vast number and variety of the undertakings ... They seem to reach into the farthest limits, and to effect a just incidence of philanthropy over all the area of human need. So great have been the changes in the conditions of life and work of the people of England during the last seventy years, that the new forms and channels through which the ameliorating efforts reach them would almost seem to justify the common impression that care for the poor and suffering springs from new impulses of the present century.³

It was no co-incidence that Burdett-Coutts' remarks prefaced a series of congress papers; she was a prominent and rich philanthropist. Significantly, Hesba Stretton was the author of the first paper, 'Women's Mission for Children'. Speaking, or writing in this most prestigious and public of forums—the Royal British Commission to the Chicago Exhibition of 1893—Hesba Stretton is identified as an "Eminent Writer" and in that capacity she once more spoke out.

I have examined three women whose lives bear similarities but there are many more women who, like them, lived independently and broke with convention. I have looked beyond their contributions to philanthropy and into their writings and *modus operandi*. This pursuit has led to a better understanding of these women's aspirations and provides a more complex picture of Victorian life and women's distinctive religious ethos. These women, Skene, Stretton and Tucker, were not part of an identifiable group and have been neglected in favour of those involved in major feminist campaigns. Nevertheless, I have argued that within their separate activities, there are signs of incipient feminism and a belief in religion as a moral guiding force which they shared with more prominent campaigners for women's rights.

Skene, Stretton and Tucker, in raising their voices, shifted registers to adapt their writing to suit specific needs, including their own. Beyond writing, they participated publicly and constructively in reforming their own society. They could not take part in enacting legislative changes, and the absence of the female vote necessitated different political approaches, but each woman, armed with specialized knowledge, learned to

3 Baroness Angela Burdett-Coutts (ed.), *Woman's Mission: A Series of Congress Papers on the Philanthropic Work of Women by Eminent Writers*, Sampson Low, Marston & Company, London, 1893, p. xiv.

apply pressure where it could count. In the process, it seems they achieved a perceptible change in the consciousness of their audiences and, in Hesba Stretton's case, major legislative reform as well. Patricia Hollis calls this 'pressure from without',⁴ while noting the need for specialized monographs which examined 'the propriety and ideology of pressure from without, its machinery, its impact.'⁵ My endeavour has been to highlight and integrate the processes of pressure applied by three women, through their own actions and through their fiction and other writing, and to revise earlier biographical assessments. Throughout this process, I have tried to relocate rather than rescue these women and to illuminate more of their life experiences, exposing their publishing networks and friends.

The "public versus private" spheres debate currently absorbs much historical and biographical debate. One is also constantly aware of the artifice and the historian's desire to create a semblance of order out of the apparent chaos and randomness of daily and yearly events in individuals' lives. In dividing this study into public and private worlds, I have not ignored the fact that social and private life entails a constant interaction. Are these "spheres" merely a 'rhetorical device', or were they temporal boundaries which mid-Victorian women self-consciously crossed once they became involved in social work and public discourse? My own view is that many Victorian women were aware of the divide, if only as a metaphor. Yet, rather than invariably impeding progress and publication, it energised women like Skene, Stretton and Tucker who were committed simultaneously to the preservation of Christian moral values and the achievement of change.

Didacticism in literature is clearly not the singular preserve of Georgian and Victorian female novelists. 'Moral' messages emerge today in contemporary novels and essays, in children's fiction, and in the scripts of television 'soapies', films and drama; this is part of the literary legacy both shared and left by Skene, Stretton and Tucker. They used fiction, the most popular and accessible mode of the day, because they knew it would reach people in homes and halls, in schools, libraries and learned institutions. What they also hoped for, and ultimately received, was the knowledge that their writing in all its forms, reached more exalted places where the inhabitants had influence and power.

Without resorting to the use of 'fiction mainly as illustrative material for a life [which is] little more than a game of literary snap', I have tried to use each writer's

4 *Pressure From Without in Early Victorian England*, Patricia Hollis (ed.), Edward Arnold, London, 1974.

5 *Ibid.*, p. viii.

fictional works to draw upon autobiographical elements contained within these documents.⁶ A writer recreates in the imagination another 'real' world even if insisting loudly that she writes only that which is 'founded on fact'. Skene, Stretton and Tucker made such claims for veracity and felt they had authority to do so; they drew from direct experience and research, and through an accretion of social and specialized knowledge, they bolstered their status.

I have also sought to acknowledge the imaginative worlds they desired. Utopian, 'transcendent visions', perhaps celestial cities and pastoral havens, would ideally be peopled by men, women and children of Christian conscience, acting ethically, under an ethos of human love, mutual obligation and perfect laws.⁷ That being said, however, these writers and philanthropists were realist enough to recognise the imperfectability of human beings. Like true evangelicals, they often began by examining their own emotional responses, personal motives and behaviours, and showed compassion for the less-than-perfect individuals who inhabited their fictive places and 'real' worlds of the mid-nineteenth century.

These writers' fictional texts are both subjective and objective documents produced during a period of expansive publishing from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. In print, conflicting discourses emerged on the causes of human impoverishment and suffering and the correct forms of philanthropy. Skene, Stretton and Tucker each contributed to these debates in prose and fiction and grafted on their views, based upon personal explorations and experience. Some readers challenged their conservative beliefs, but many more read, absorbed and agreed with the writers and accepted their perceptions and practical solutions.

Finally, religious fiction, evangelical fiction, semi-religious fiction, didactic fiction—all labels given to this highly distinctive genre—are seen now as Victorian artifacts, in text but also in publishing form, design and illustration. As such, the books

⁶ Elisabeth Jay, *Mrs. Oliphant: A Fiction to Herself*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 2. It is a matter of regret that I was unable to obtain a copy of Elisabeth Jay's biography until this conclusion was written. A copy was finally obtained through the National Library of Australia's Fastrak inter-library loan service, all copies having been sold out in Australia at the time of writing, November 1995. Mrs. Oliphant, apart from the fact that she was a contemporary of Skene, Stretton and Tucker and an even more popular novelist amongst adult readers, was also a close associate of Blackwood's, the publishers with whom Felicia Skene had a long association. Comparisons in their experience and correspondence would have enriched this study. But alas, all too late.

⁷ Patricia Demers credits Hesba Stretton with supplying readers with 'transcendent visions' and suggests that for her, as for other evangelical writers, 'religion was a necessary, moral code of ethics ... and a guiding force in their fiction'. Demers, 'The Letter and the Spirit of Evangelical Writing of and for Children', *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century England*, James Holt McGavran, Jr. (ed.), University of George Press, 1991, pp. 134-135.

have an intrinsic value as cultural forms—Felicia Skene, for example, would be surprised to learn that an early copy of *Hidden Depths*, the book which threatened her respectability, was offered recently for sale by a London antiquarian bookseller for the sum of £300. But beyond the antiquarian value, there is the question of language. The fact is that the language of these writers, accepted by contemporaries as “normal”, is regarded today as outmoded and “old fashioned”; what struck an immediate chord with Victorians often eludes the immediacy demanded by modern readers.

Nevertheless, these books and their texts are of inestimable value: Skene’s, Stretton’s and Tucker’s books provide examples of what many Victorians regarded as “good books”; they are measures of literary taste, social concern and religious sensibility. Historians have chosen to pass over them hurriedly looking to other, perhaps more erudite or politically fashionable examples. Similarly, the women who wrote the books and performed acts of philanthropy have gone largely unremembered.

What I set out to do in this study is to rekindle interest in these books and the women who wrote them. My hope is for readers to hear again these remarkable mid-nineteenth-century ‘muffled radicals’, and to take their books ‘off the shelf’ for re-reading and re-consideration.

Appendices

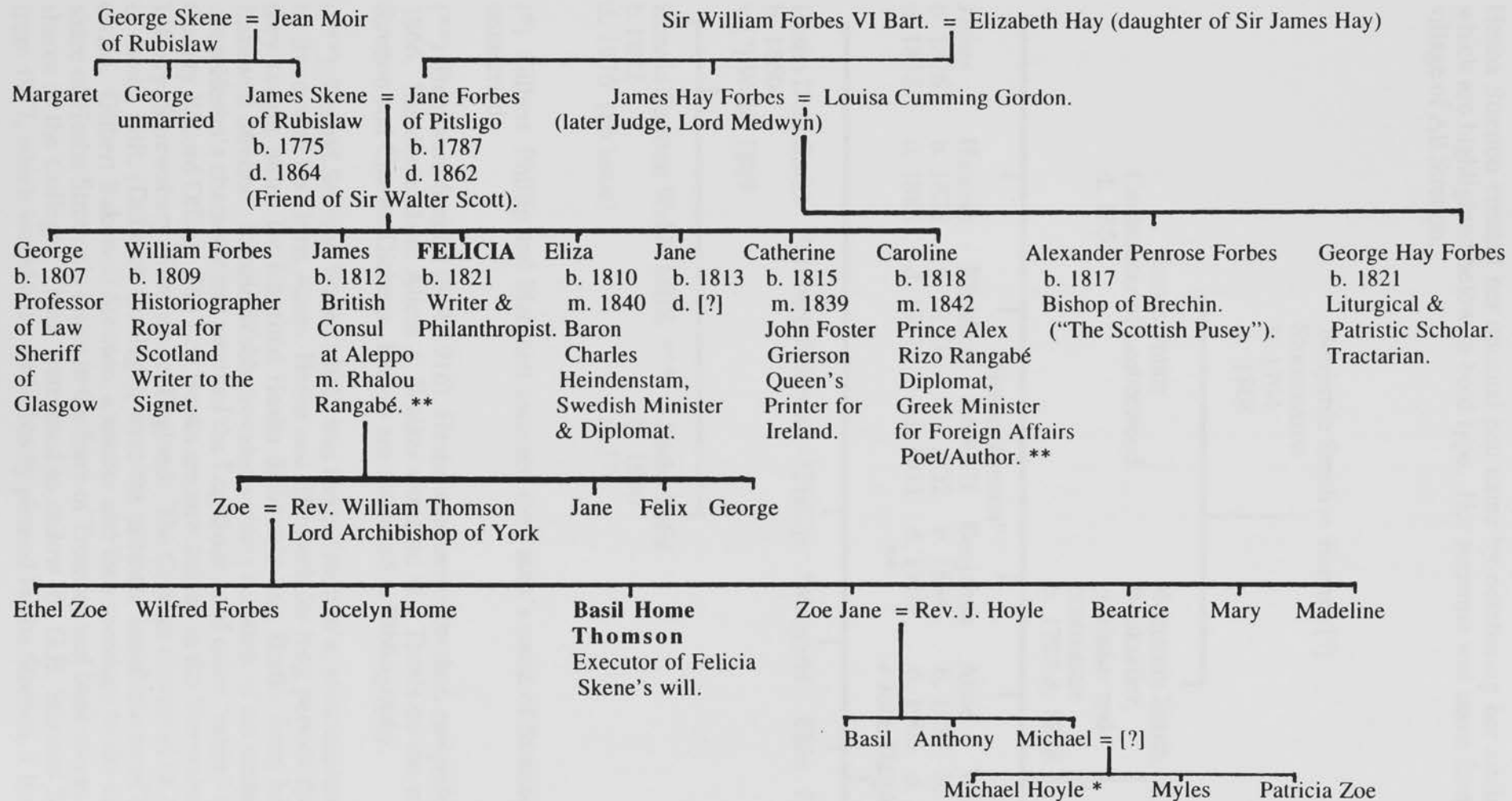


Genealogies

The following is a list of the names of the individuals who are mentioned in the genealogies. The names are listed in alphabetical order.

FELICIA MARY FRANCES SKENE (1821-1899)

“Erskine Moir” “Francis Scougal” “Oxonienensis”



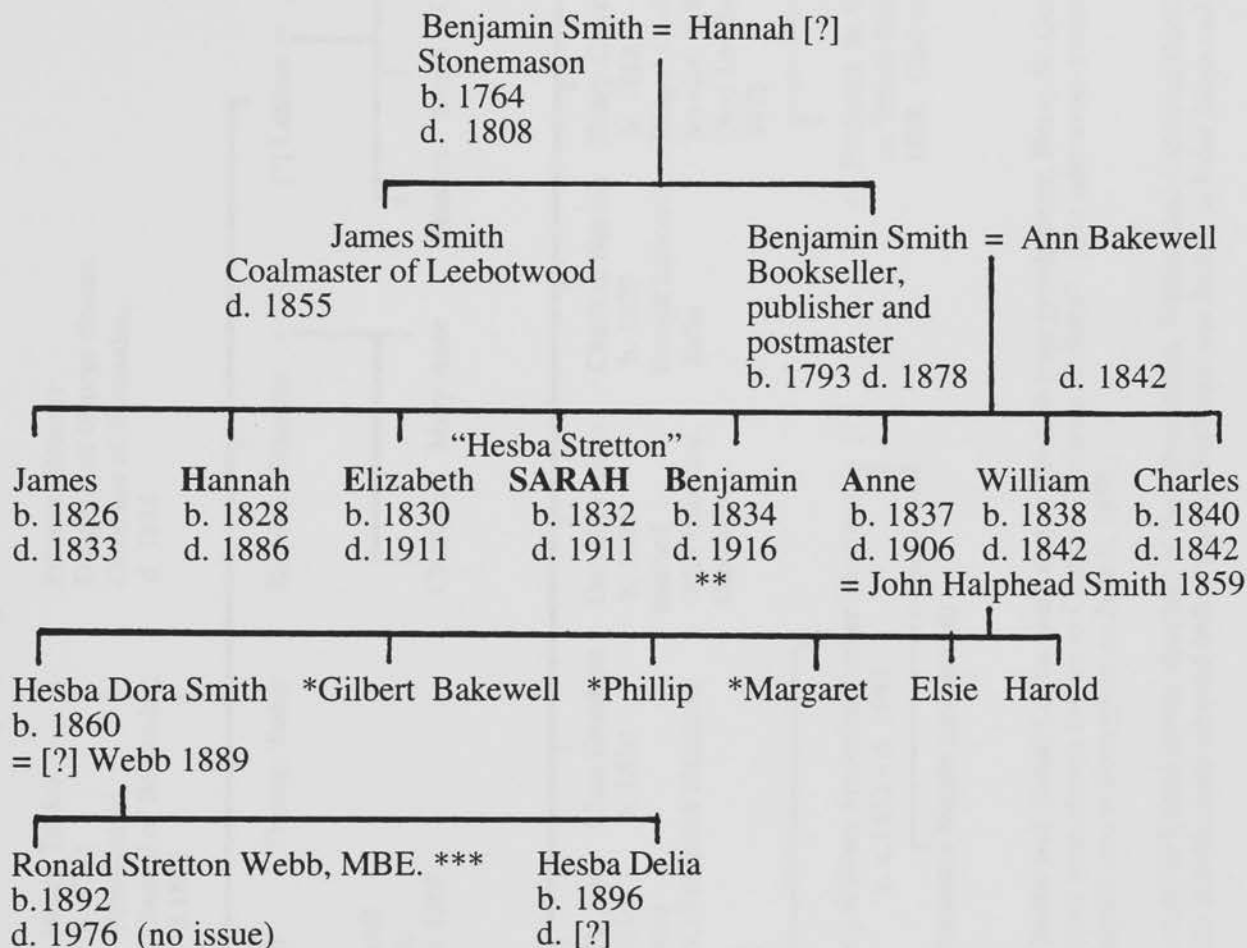
(*) I am grateful to Michael Hoyle, Felicia Skene's descendant, who has provided me with a full genealogical table of the Skene descendants, first amended by his maternal great grand mother Zoe Jane Hoyle. Not all descendants are represented here; only those who were instrumental in Felicia Skene's life and career. It will be noted that Alexander Penrose Forbes and his brother, George, were first cousins of Felicia Skene and were particularly influential in her religious development. Alexander, Bishop of Brechin established the sisterhood of St. Mary and St. Modwenna. He was nominated as Bishop by the Anglican High Church leader, E.B. Pusey.

(**) Rhalou Rangabé and Prince Alex Rizo Rangabé were sister and brother from an old and influential Phanariot family, children of Jakovaki de Rangabé.

GENEALOGY

"Hesba Stretton" - Sarah Smith (1832-1911).

Hesba Stretton created her unusual pen name by combining her siblings' first names which are highlighted below in bold type. Her surname was taken from the Shropshire village of All Stretton.



(*) Gilbert Phillip and Margaret assumed their aunt's name of Stretton. All remained unmarried.

(**) Benjamin Smith (1834-1916), Hesba's favourite brother, emigrated to America in 1866. His descendant, Alicia A. Walker wrote an MA Thesis on the writings of Hesba Stretton and Charles Dickens. Details are contained in Bibliography.

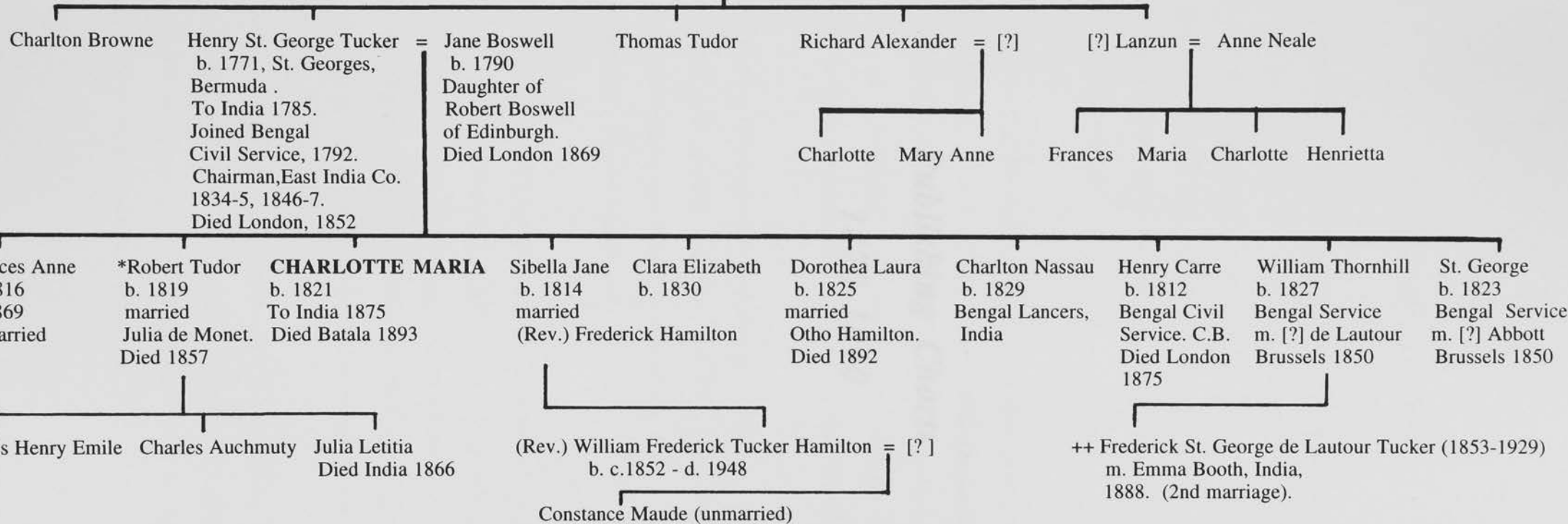
(***) Ronald Stretton Webb, MBE, was Hesba Stretton's, great-nephew. Occasionally he lived with his Great Aunts, Hesba and Elizabeth for long periods during which time they taught him. He inherited Hesba Stretton's Log Books from his uncle, Gilbert Bakewell Stretton. Ronald Webb provided various accounts of his aunts and commented upon Hesba's character and returned the Log Books and other "relics" to the Shropshire County Record Office. The Log Books are now lodged in the Shrewsbury Local Studies Library, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England. The College Governors of Alleyn's College of God's Gift, (Dulwich College), were the ultimate beneficiaries of Hesba Stretton's estate. Gilbert Bakewell Stretton, a master and then secretary to the Governors, left his share of Hesba Stretton's estate in the form of Treasury and bank stocks and commercial shares to the College. These were used to endow the G.B. Stretton Scholarship Fund from 1977, which would have undoubtedly pleased Hesba Stretton, a former teacher.

CHARLOTTE MARIA TUCKER (1821-1893)

“A Lady of England”

Henry Tucker
b. 1742
President of
Council of Bermudas.
d.1802

Frances (Bruere)
Daughter of George Bruere
Governor of Bermudas.,
d. 1814



* Robert Tucker was deserted by Julia in 1847. Their children, Louis, Charles and (Julia) Letitia, were sent to live with their grandparents, Henry St. George and Jane Tucker. Charlotte Maria, their aunt, became their unofficial “mother”. The children were always known as Charlotte Tucker’s “Robins”. (She later wrote a number of tales in which the “Robins” appeared.) Robert Tudor, then Judge, was killed defending his post at Futteypore on June 9, 1857.

++ Frederick St. George de Lautour Booth, Charlotte Tucker’s nephew, married Emma Booth, daughter of the Salvationists, William and Catharine Booth. Frederick added the Booth surname to his own. He and his wife worked in India and later in America. While in India, each adopted Indian names. Frederick was known as Fakir Singh and Emma became Dulini.

The Publishers' Circular

The following graph tables have been prepared using figures taken from *The Publishers' Circular* from 1870 to 1890, when the publishers, Longmans Green, Wicks & Co. first began to produce simple analytical tables on a regular basis. It should be noted that, from 1870, it was very possible for readers to gauge publishing activity from the descriptions of new books, and by consulting index tables of books for specific categories devised by the Editors.

Unfortunately, pages of *The Publishers' Circular* in which such tables were included were not independent well in photographic form. Book lists, bibliographies, and other information are encouraged to compile the **Publishing Charts** for the period 1870-1890, which contain information which can be used to supplement the data provided by the *Publishers' Circular*.

Publishing Charts

1870-1890

The graph tables provided here are not complete, they indicate only the total number of new books compared with specific categories for the years 1870-1890. The tables in *The Publishers' Circular* show new books, new editions, and book sales separately by year, and also provide a month-by-month summary.

The fourteen categories are: Book Lists, Book Lists, Book Lists, Book Lists, Book Lists, Book Lists, Book Lists, Book Lists, Book Lists, Book Lists, Book Lists, Book Lists, Book Lists, Book Lists. These categories were not included in the original data.

The publishers were not only able to produce a complete set of data for the years 1870-1890, but also to produce a complete set of data for the years 1870-1890. The publishers were not only able to produce a complete set of data for the years 1870-1890, but also to produce a complete set of data for the years 1870-1890.

The Publishers' Circular

The following graph tables have been prepared using figures taken from *The Publishers' Circular* from 1870 to 1890, when the publishers, Sampson Low, Marston & Company, began to produce simple analytical tables showing yearly production of books. Before that time, it was only possible for readers to gauge publishing activity from the descriptions of trade given, and by counting titles collected under the fourteen categories devised by the Editors.

Unfortunately, pages of *The Publishers' Circular* in microfiche format are too small to reproduce well in photocopied form. Book lovers, bibliographers, and bibliophiles are encouraged to consult the originals if possible, or to view the collection reproduced by Chadwyck-Healey on microfiche. The original publications contain a wealth of information which includes advertisements, obituaries, and valuable publishing gossip.

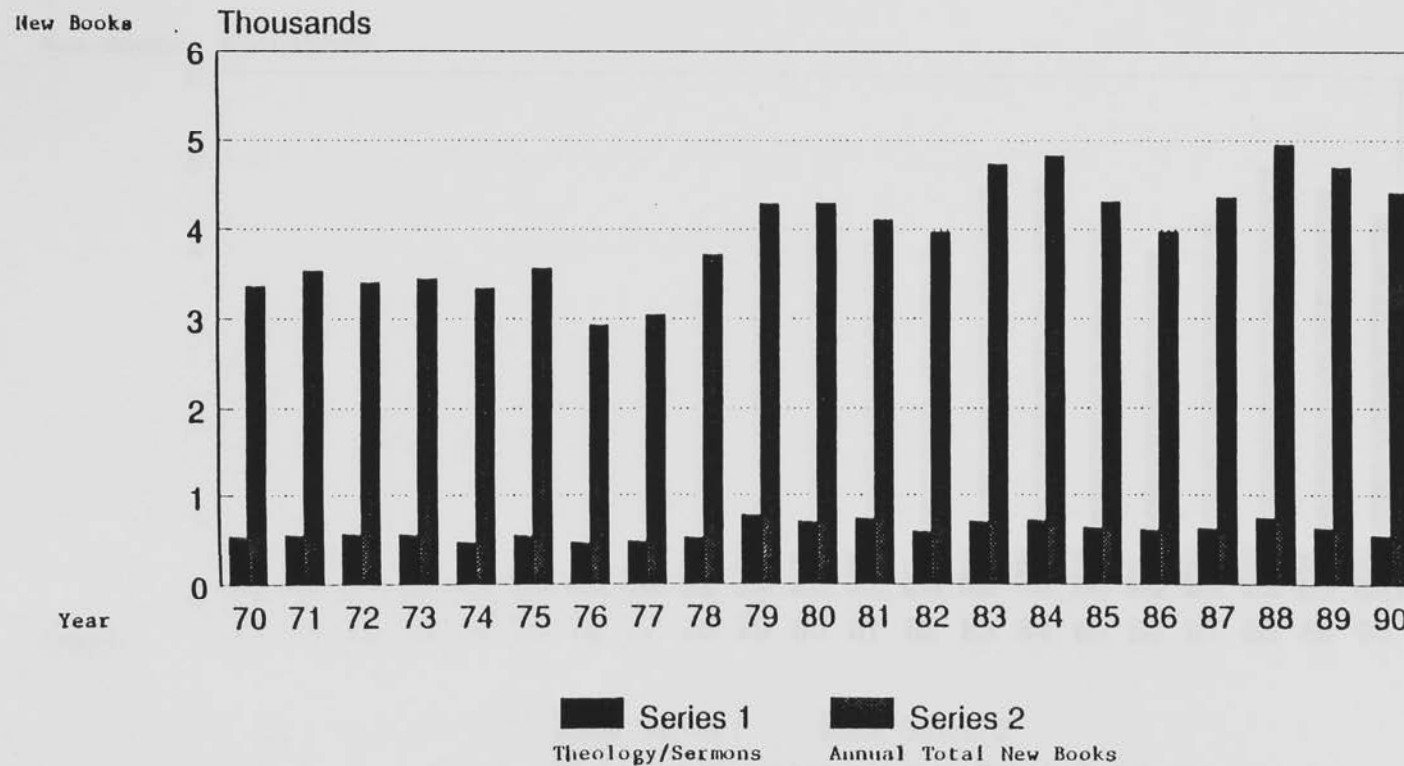
The graph tables produced here are not complex: they indicate only the total number of new books compared with specific categories for the period 1870-1890. The tables in *The Publishers' Circular* show new books, new editions, and American imports by year, and also provide a month-by-month summary.

The fourteen categories are: Theology/Sermons: Education/Classics: Juvenile Fiction: Novels/Fiction: Law/Jurisprudence: Political Science, Economics, Commerce: Arts, Science, Illustrated Works: Travel/Voyages: History/Biography: Poetry/Drama: Year Books: Medicine/Surgery: Belles Lettres, Essays, Monographs: Miscellaneous Pamphlets, not including Sermons. These categories are set against New Books.

The publishers wrote extremely useful summaries to accompany their figures in which explanations were offered for rises and falls in production. Among their suggestions for particular years were wars, taxes, trade slumps, and costs of production. Publishers today would probably provide similar explanations.

Annual Total Publications

Category: Theology/Sermons 1870-1890

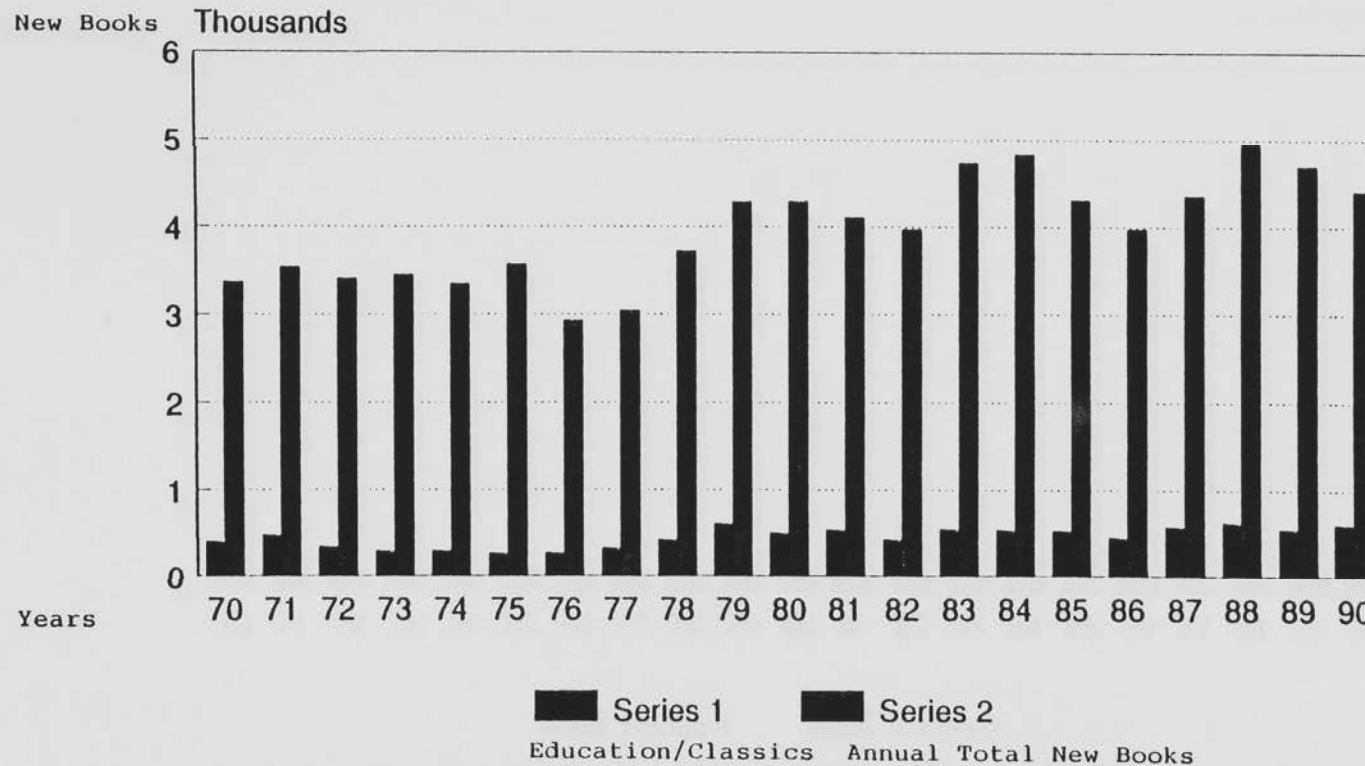


Data from The Publishers' Circular

Vols: XXXIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications

Category: Education/Classics 1870-1890

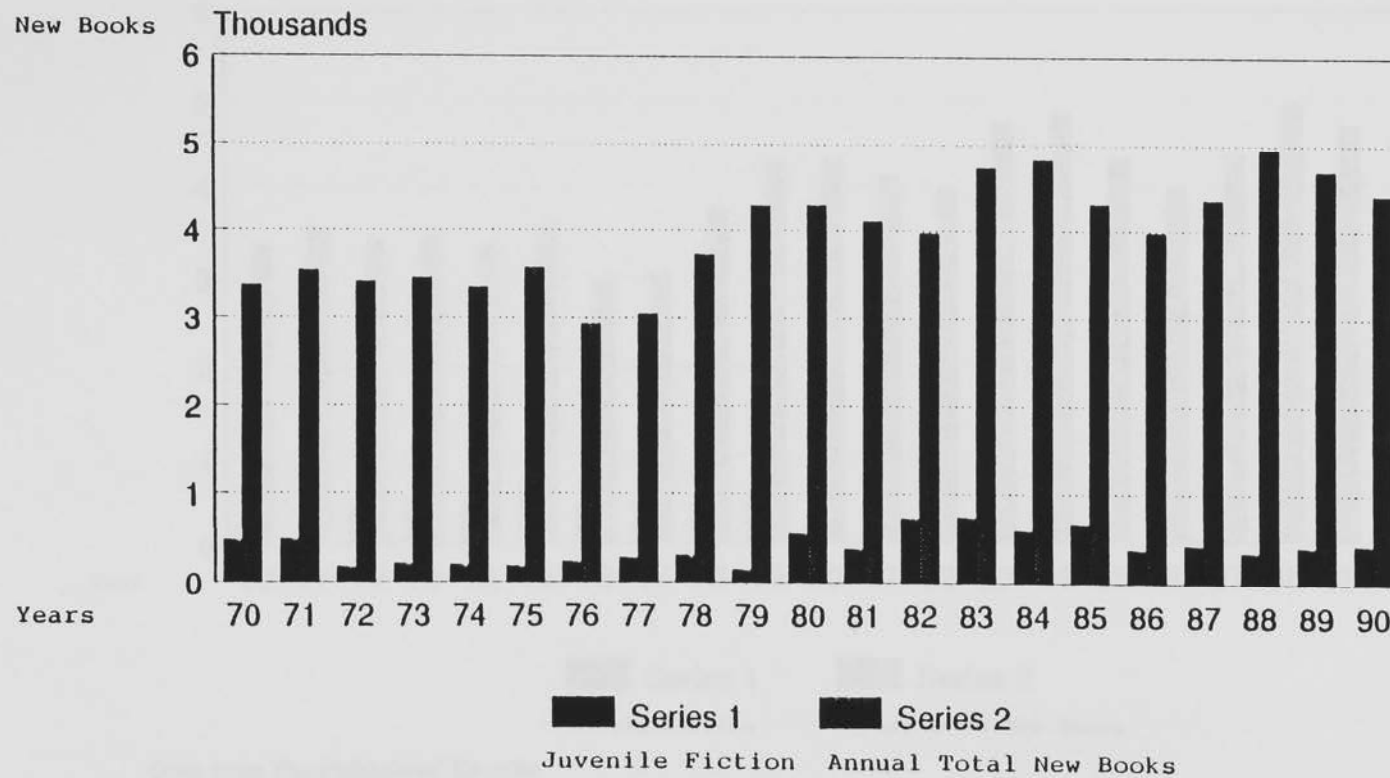


Data from The Publishers' Circular

Vols: XXXIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications

Category: Juvenile Fiction 1870-1890

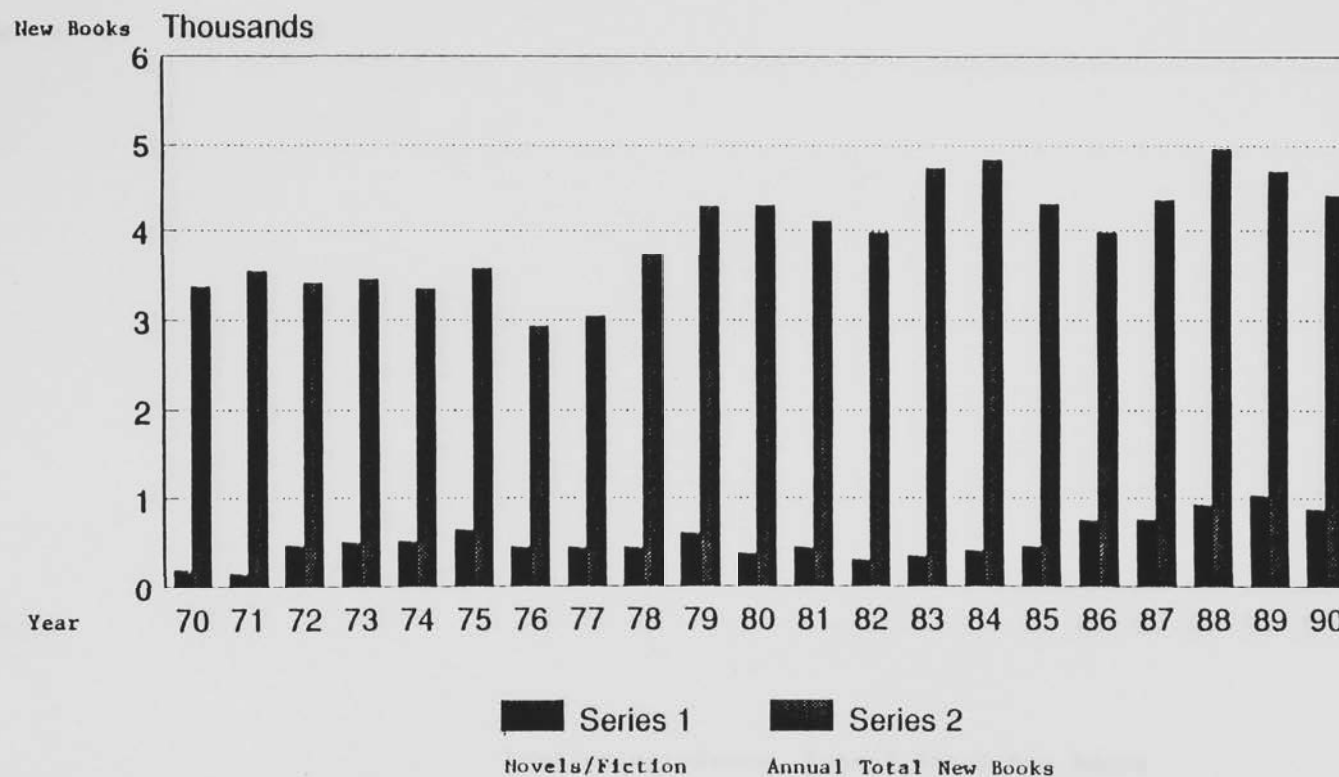


Data from The Publishers' Circular

Vols: XXXIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications

Category: Novels, Fiction 1870-1890

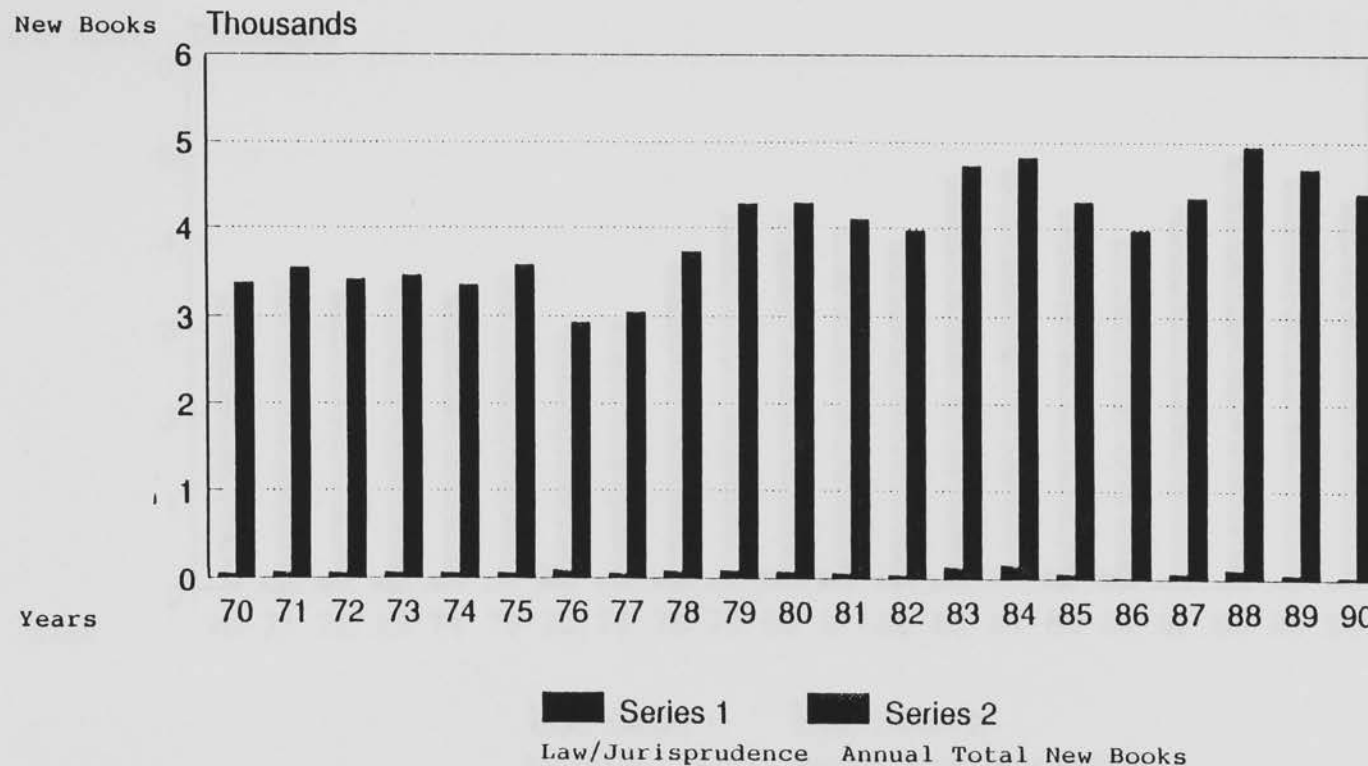


Data from The Publishers' Circular

Vols: XXXIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications

Category: Law, Jurisprudence, 1870-1890

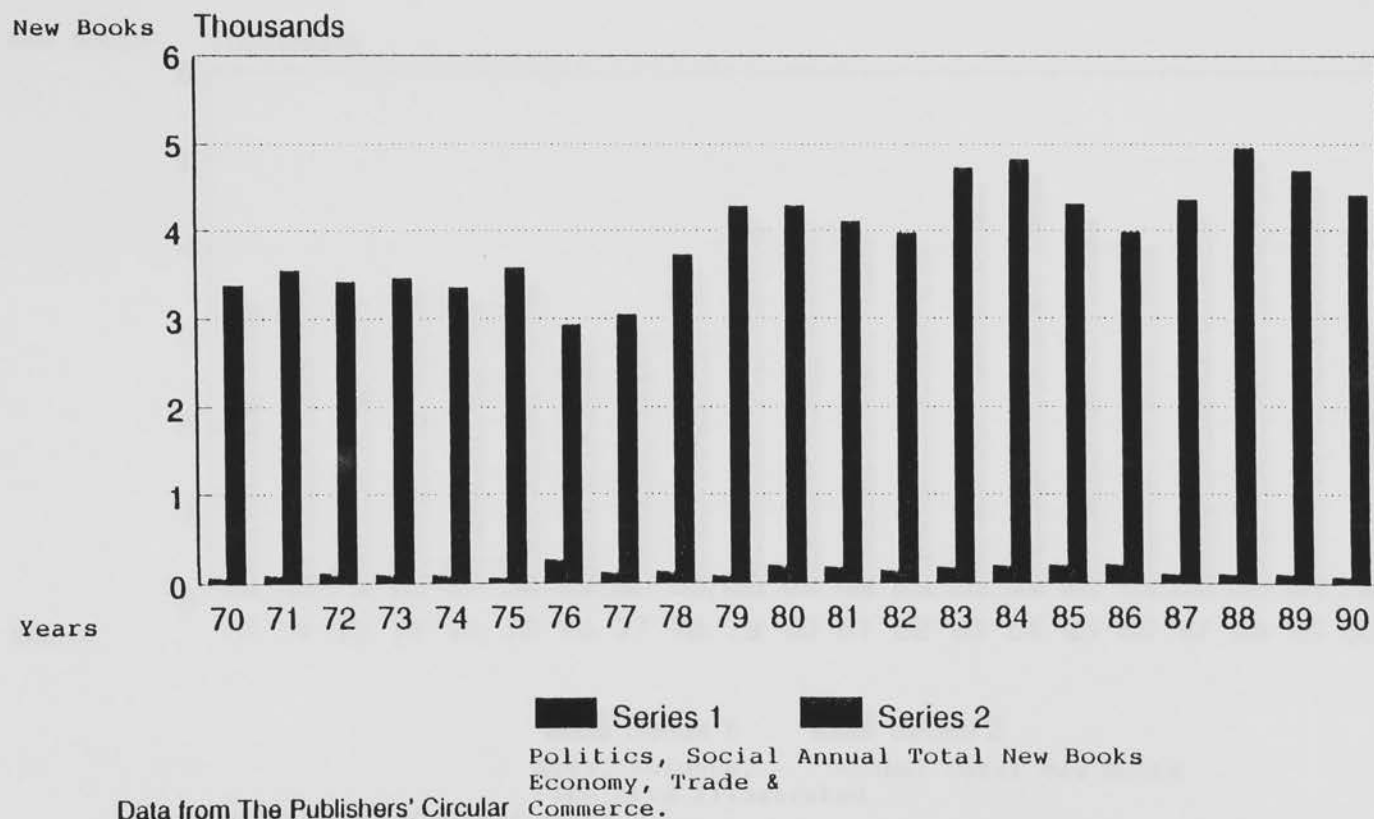


Data from The Publishers' Circular

Vols: XXXIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications

Category: Pol, Soc. Eco, Comm. 1870-1890

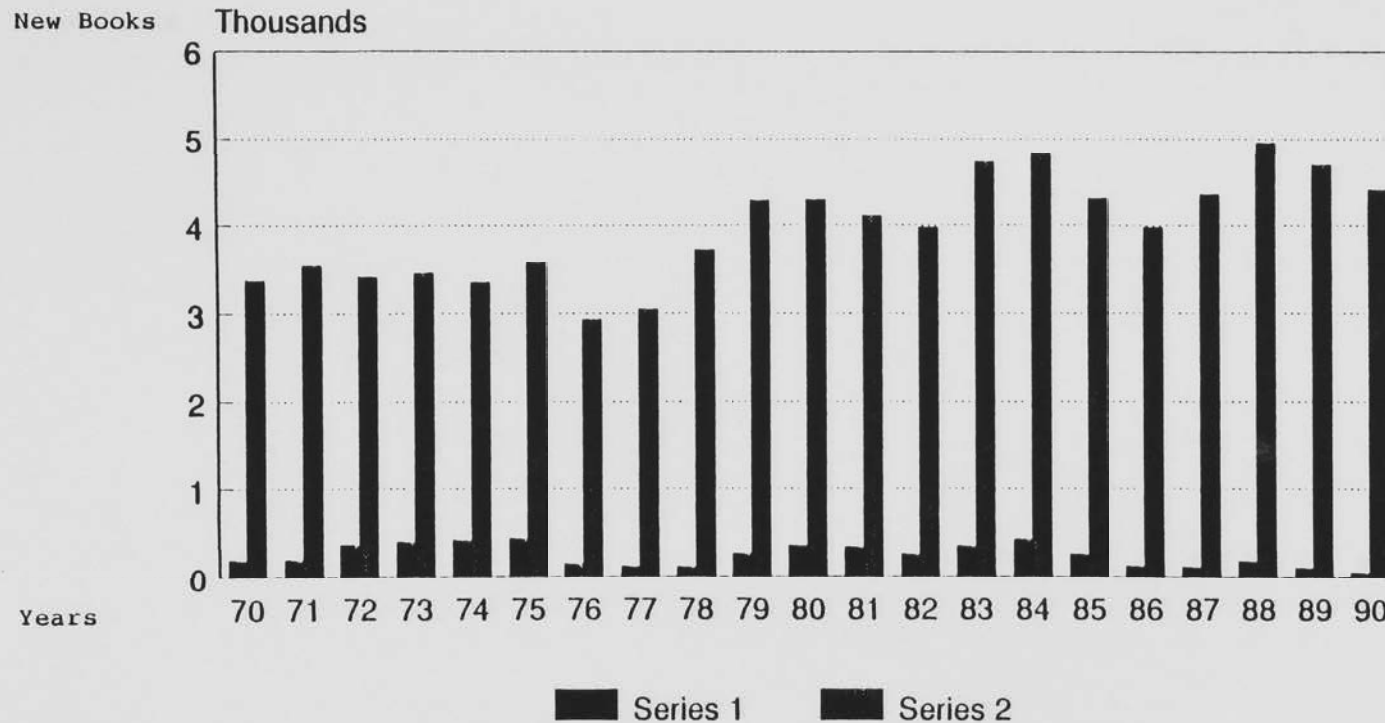


Data from The Publishers' Circular

Vols: XXXIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications

Arts, Sci, Illus. Works, 1870-1890

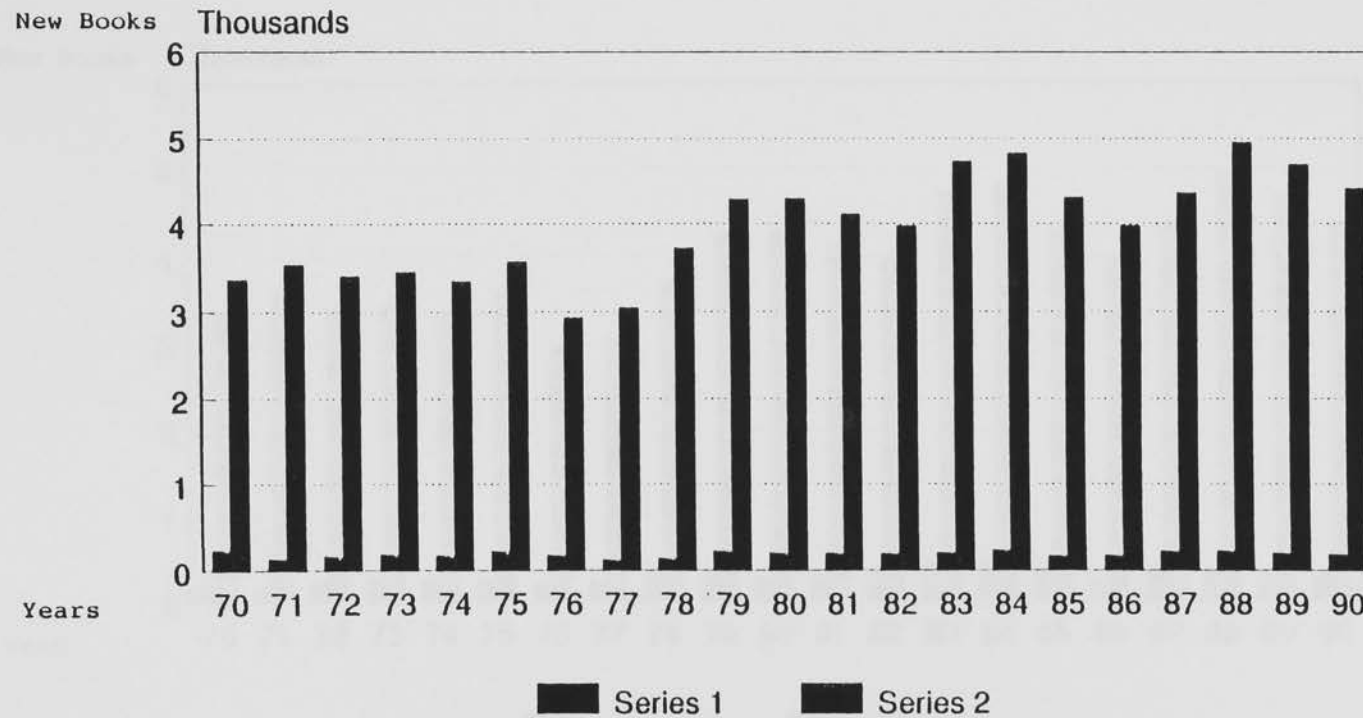


Arts, Science, Annual Total New Books
Fine Arts Illustrated Works.

Data from The Publishers' Circular

Vols: XXXIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications Travel, Voyages, Geog.1870-1890



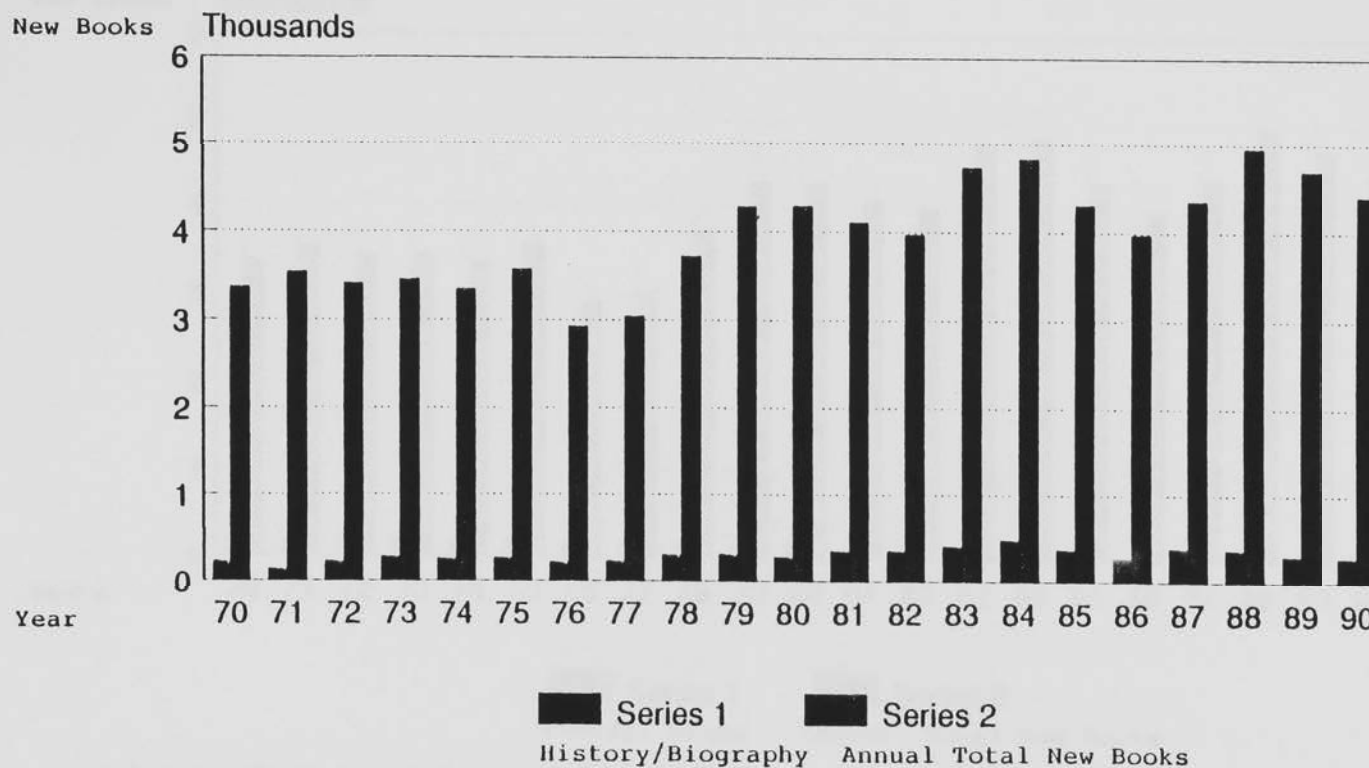
Travel, Voyages, Annual Total Books
Geography.

Data from The Publishers' Circular

Vols: XXXIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications

History, Biography, 1870-1890

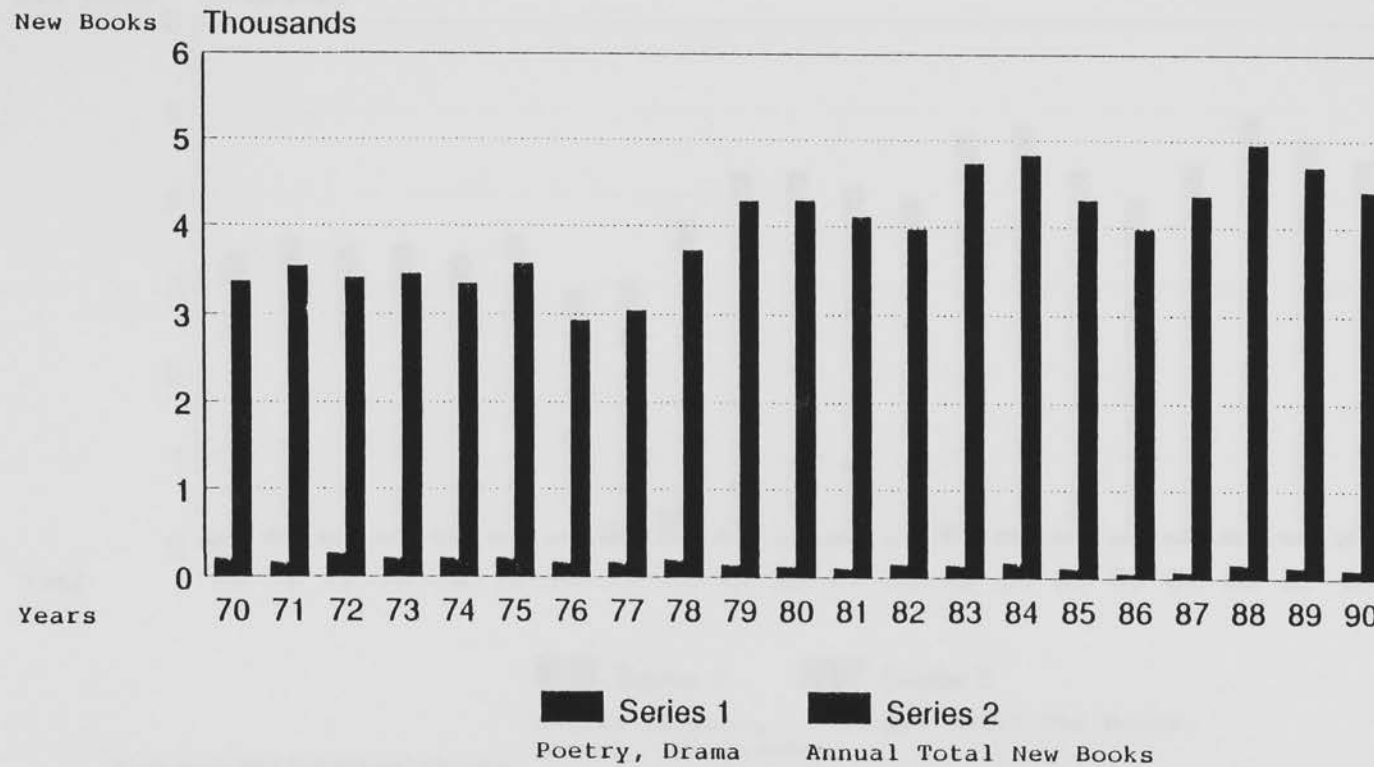


Data from The Publishers' Circular

Vols: XXXIIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications

Poetry, Drama 1870-1890

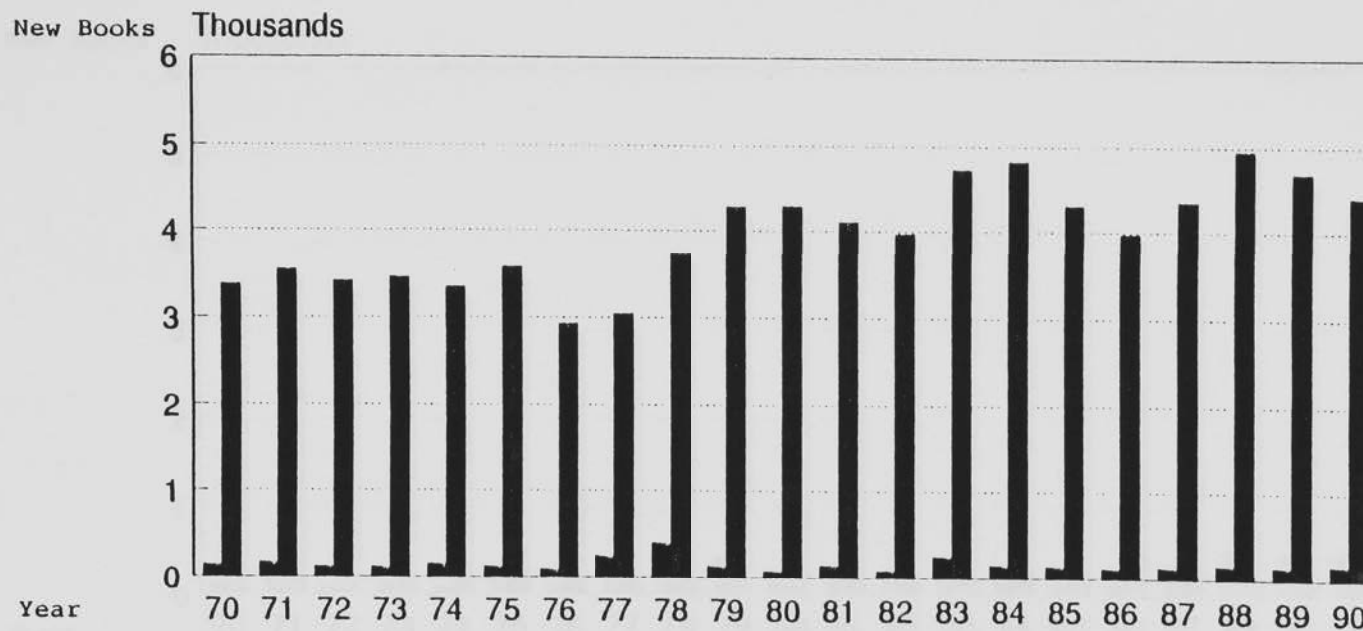


Data from The Publishers' Circular

Vols: XXXIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications

Belles Lettres Essays Monographs 1870-90



Series 1 Series 2

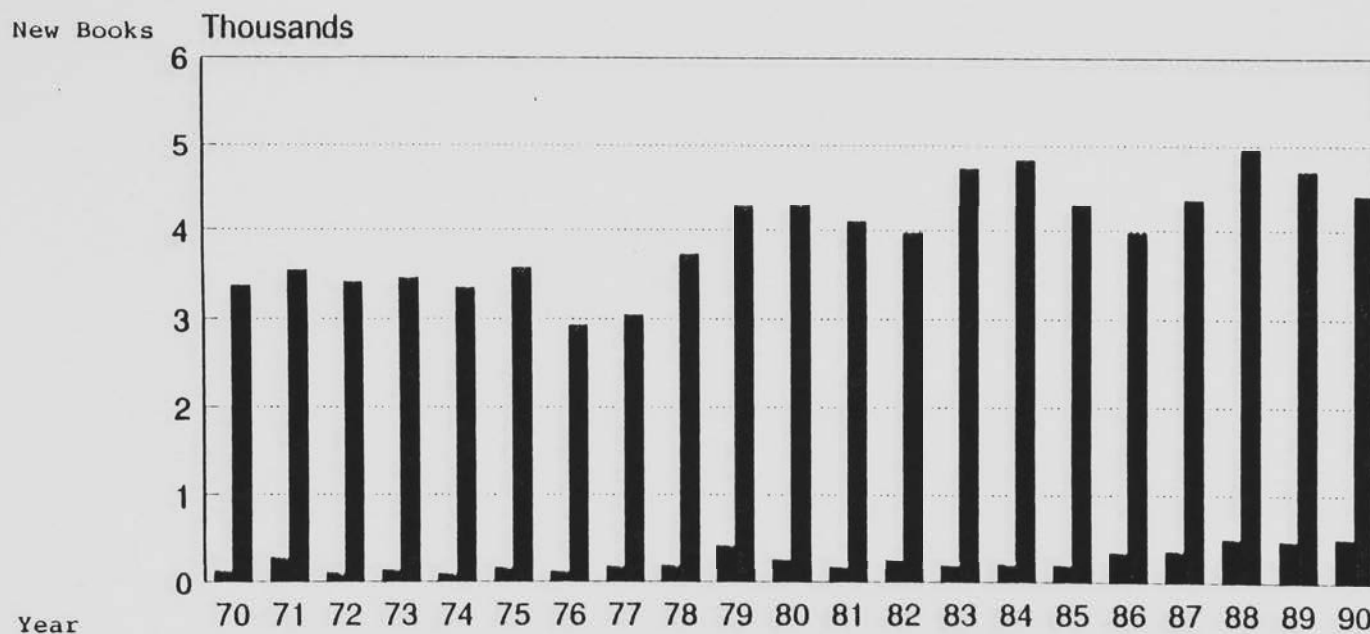
Belles Lettres, Essays, Monographs Annual Total New Books.

Data from The Publishers' Circular

Vols: XXXIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications

Misc/Pamphlets(not.inc.Sermons)1870-1890

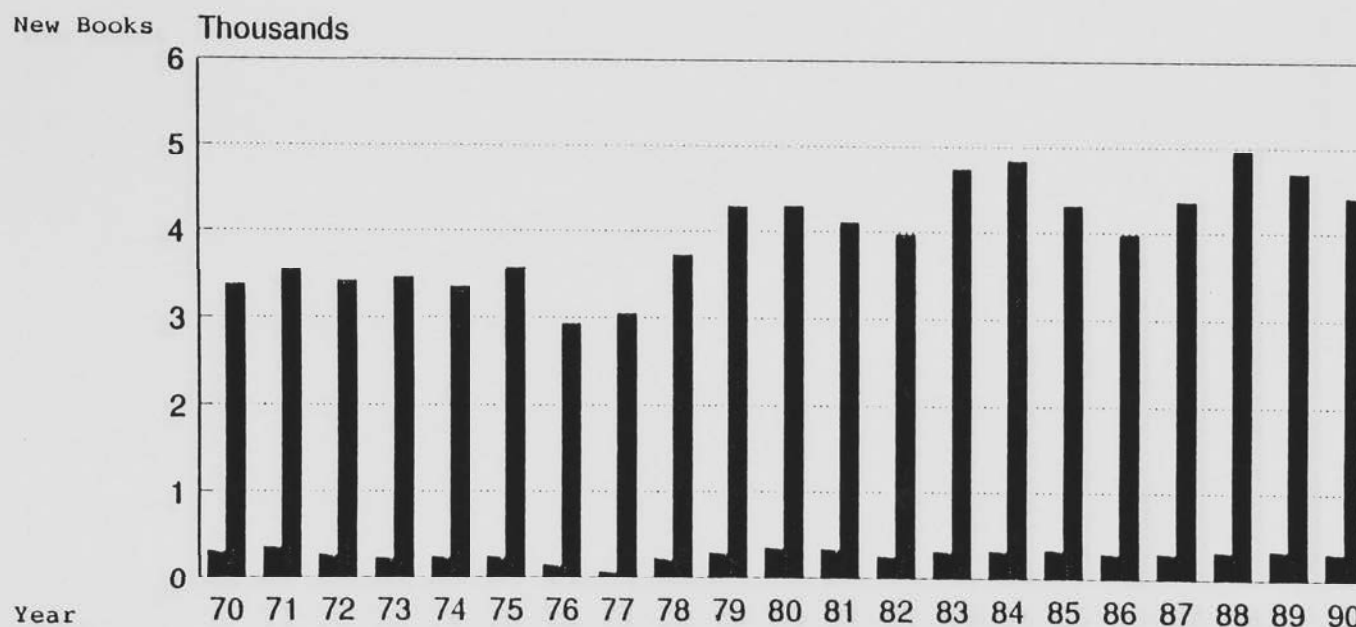


Series 1
 Series 2
 Misc. Pamphlets Annual Total New Books
 (not including Sermons)

Data from The Publishers' Circular
 Vols: XXXIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications

Year Books 1870-1890



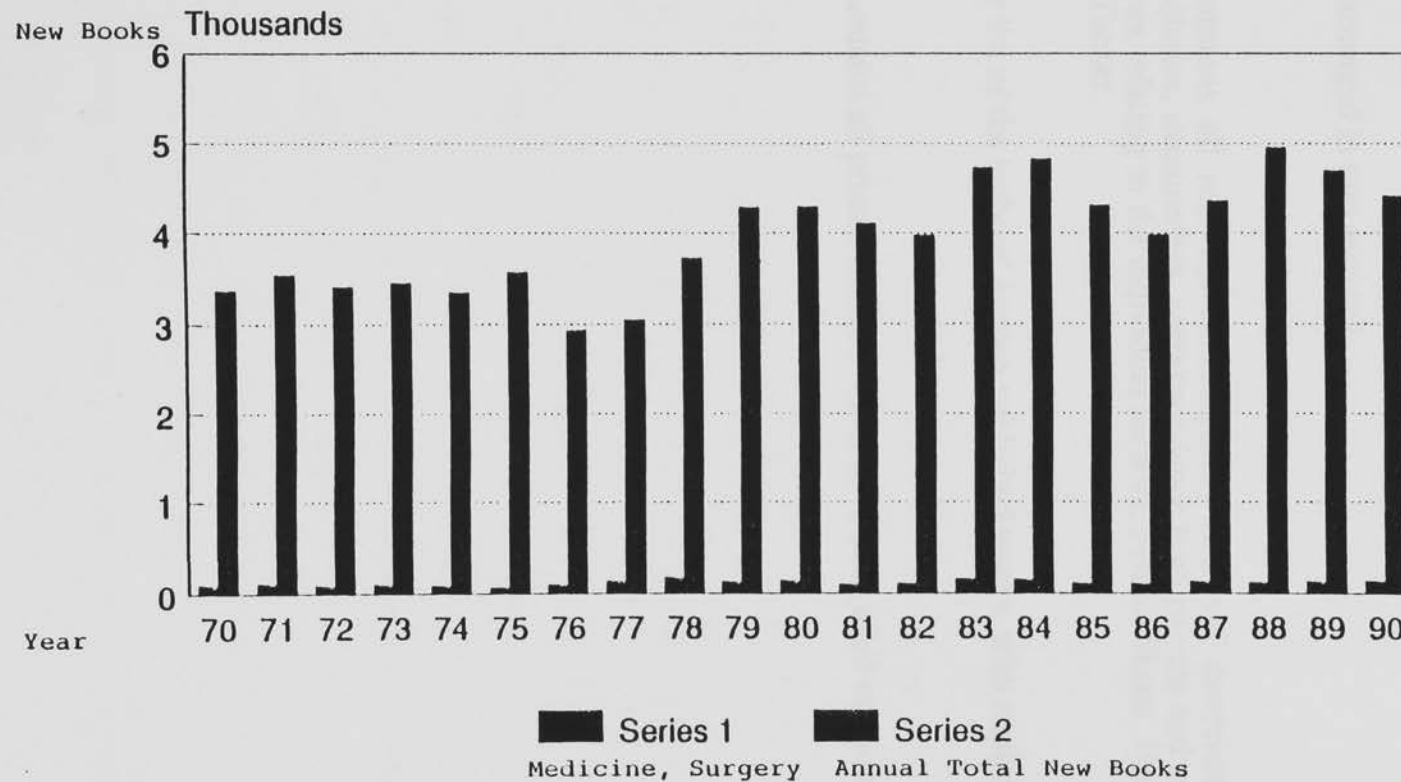
Series 1
 Series 2

Year Books Annual Total New Books

Data from The Publishers' Circular
 Vols: XXXIII to LIII

Annual Total Publications

Medicine, Surgery 1870-1890



Data from The Publishers' Circular

Vols: XXXVIII to LIII

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This bibliography is arranged in two sections.

The first section contains all relevant contemporary archival materials including publishers' records, diaries, manuscripts, correspondence both private and public, wills, obituaries, and reviews relating to the individual authors, Felicia Skene, Hesba Stretton and Charlotte Maria Tucker.

This is followed by a list of the authors' known published works, with explanatory notes where applicable.

The second section contains all printed sources which have been cited or consulted.

Archival and Manuscript Materials relating to Felicia Mary Frances Skene, 'Francis Scougal', 'Oxoniensis', 'Erskine Moir', (1821-1899), and Bibliography of all known Published Works by F.M.F. Skene.

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- All the articles cited (*) above are condensed chapters taken from Felicia Skene's

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'Objects and Means', An Appeal on Behalf of the London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children by Hesba Stretton, c. 1884. NSPCC Archives. (This appeal was published later in the Christmas number of the *Sunday Magazine* under the title "The Paths of Peace", December, 1884.)

'Cruelly-Treated Children by Hesba Stretton', *Letter leaflet* No. 2, London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, c. 1885. NSPCC Archives.

'One of God's Palaces: The Royal Albert Asylum', An Appeal by Hesba Stretton for the Royal Albert Asylum for Idiots and Imbeciles for the Northern Counties, Lancaster'. *Pamphlet*, n.d. c. 1885. (The text for this pamphlet was taken from *Sunday Magazine*, January 1885.) Ref. 928/3, Shropshire Record Office, Shrewsbury.

Hesba Stretton, 'Women's Work for Children', in Baroness A. Burdett-Coutts (ed.), *Woman's Mission, A Series of Congress Papers on the Philanthropic Work of Women by Eminent Writers*, Sampson Low, Marston & Company, London, 1893.

Works of Fiction by Hesba Stretton

Journals

Articles are arranged by **Journal Title** in alphabetical and chronological order.

N.B. Many serials were later published in book form. These are listed separately under **Books** (below), with publishers names and dates where known.

All The Year Round, 'The Ghost in the Clock Room', 1859.*

All The Year Round, 'The Postmaster's Daughter', November, 1859.

All The Year Round, 'Withered Daisy', November, 1861.

All The Year Round, 'Aboard An Emigrant Ship', April, 1862

All The Year Round, 'Felicia Compton', January, 1863.

All The Year Round, 'A Provincial Post Office', February, 1863.

All The Year Round, 'Eleven Hundred Pounds', August, 1864.

All The Year Round, 'The Real Murderer', January, 1864.
All The Year Round, 'Another Past Lodger Relates Certain Passages to Her Husband, 1864.*
All The Year Round, 'Not To Be Taken For Granted', 1865. *
All The Year Round, 'The Travelling Post Office', 1866. *
All The Year Round, 'Gypsy Glimpses', May 1869.
All The Year Round, 'No Bribery', October, 1869.
All The Year Round, 'The Story of the Duchess of Veronica', 1869, serial.
All The Year Round, 'Mrs. Haddon's History', May 7-21, 1870, serial.
All The Year Round, 'Lord Westbourne's Heir', August, 1872.
 (* Christmas Numbers)

Argosy, 'Ten Years A Nun', December, 1867.
Argosy, 'Quiet Attentions', April, 1868.
Argosy, 'Half An Hour's Walk in Normandy', May, 1868.
Argosy, 'Out of this World', n.d.

Band of Hope Review, 'A Knotty Question', No. 126, June, 1871.
Band of Hope Review, 'I Hungered and Ye Gave Me Meat', n.d.

Chamber's Journal, 'British Pompeii, September, 1859.
Chamber's Journal, 'Manchester Free Libraries', June, 1860.

Cottager and Artisan, 'The Worth of a Baby', n.d.

Day of Rest, 'Lost Gip', n.d. c. 1872.
Day of Rest, 'The Battle of the Poor: Sketches from Courts and Alleys,' Dec. 1872.
Day of Rest, 'The King's Servants, 1873.

Good Words, 'Gutter' Children, Vol. 14, 1873, unsigned.
Good Words, 'The Storm of Life', 1876.

Household Words, 'The Lucky Leg', March, 1859.

Leisure Hour, 'A French Cotton Town', n.d.
Leisure Hour, 'Cry ... a Crash ... A Groan!', (poem), c.1862.
Leisure Hour, 'A Summer Day on the Wrekin', 1863.
Leisure Hour, 'David Lloyd's Last Will', Vol. 888 onwards. Jan. 1869, serial.
Leisure Hour, 'Max Krömer', 1871.

Sunday At Home, 'Jessica's First Prayer', 1866.
Sunday At Home, 'Jessica's Mother', 1866.
Sunday At Home, 'Little Meg's Children', 1869.
Sunday At Home, 'Bede's Charity', 1872.
Sunday At Home, 'A Thorny Path', 1879.

Sunday Magazine, 'Facts on a Thread of Fiction: In Prison and Out', 1878.
Sunday Magazine, 'A Christian Patriot; An East End Sketch', n.d.
Sunday Magazine, 'Carola', Vol. XIII, 1884, serial.
Sunday Magazine, 'A Little Blessing and other Short Stories', Dec. 1888.
Sunday Magazine, 'An Acrobat's Girlhood', Vol. XVIII, 1889.
Sunday Magazine, 'The Thieves' Supper, Vol. II, [?]
Sunday Magazine, 'Half Brothers', 1892, serial.

Temple Bar, 'Alice Gilbert's Confessions', May, 1862.
Temple Bar, 'The Blackburn Sewing-Schools', Vol. VII, March, 1863.
Temple Bar, 'Humphrey Grainger's Losses', August, 1862.
Temple Bar, 'Maurice Craven's Madness', February, 1867.

Welcome Guest, 'Winifred's Trouble', July, 1861.

Works of Fiction

Books

Place of publication is London unless otherwise stated.

Abbreviation: Religious Tract Society - R.T.S.

N.B. Many of Hesba Stretton's works of fiction were republished in the USA. Consult the *National Union Catalogue Pre-1956 Imprints*, for additional information on publishers and titles.

- 1861 *A Christian Christmas: Annie & Roger*, publisher unknown.
- 1864 *Fern's Hollow*, R.T.S.
- 1865 *The Children of Cloverley*, R.T.S.
- 1865 *Enoch Roden's Training*, R.T.S.
- 1866 *The Fishers of Derby Haven*, R.T.S.
- 1866 *The Sweet Story of Old: A Sunday Book for the Little Ones*, R.T.S.
- 1867 *The Clives of Burcot*. (Reprinted, *The Price of a Secret*, 1909) R.T.S.
- 1867 *Jessica's First Prayer*, R.T.S.
- 1867 *Paul's Courtship*, R.T.S.
- 1867 *Pilgrim Street, A Tale of Manchester Life*, R.T.S.
- 1868 *Little Meg's Children*, R.T.S.
- 1869 *Alone in London*, R.T.S.
- 1869 *David Lloyd's Last Will*, R.T.S.
- 1870 *Nellie's Dark Days*, Scottish Temperance League, Glasgow.
- 1871 *Max Krömer, The Story of the Siege of Strasbourg*, R.T.S.
- 1872 *Bede's Charity*, R.T.S.
- 1872 *The Doctor's Dilemma*, H.S. King.
- 1873 *Hester Morley's Promise*, R.T.S.
- 1873 *The King's Servants*, R.T.S.
- 1873 *Lost Gip*, R.T.S.
- 1874 *Cassy*, R.T.S.
- 1875 *Brought Home*, Scottish Temperance League, Glasgow.
- 1875 *No Work No Bread*, publisher unknown.
- 1875 *The Wonderful Life of Christ*, R.T.S. (Published in USA under the title of *The Child's Life of Christ*, J.C. Winston & Co, Philadelphia & Chicago, 1891).
- 1876 *The Crew of the Dolphin*, R.T.S.
- 1876 *Friends Till Death and Other Stories*, R.T.S.
- 1876 *Left Alone and Michael Lorio's Cross*, R.T.S.
- 1876 *Michael Lorio's Cross and Other Stories*, R.T.S.
- 1876 *A Night and A Day*, R.T.S.
- 1876 *The Storm of Life*, R.T.S.
- 1876 *Two Christmas Stories*, R.T.S.
- 1876 *The Worth of a Baby and How Apple Tree Court Was Won*, R.T.S.
- 1878 *Mrs. Burton's Best Bedroom and Other Stories*, R.T.S.
- 1878 *A Man of His Word*, R.T.S.
- 1878 *Through A Needle's Eye*, R.T.S.
- 1878 *Old Transome*, R.T.S.
- 1879 *A Thorny Path*, R.T.S.
- 1879 *Sam Franklin's Savings Bank*, R.T.S.
- 1880 *"Facts on a Thread of Fiction": In Prison and Out*, R.T.S.
- 1881 *Cobwebs and Cables*, R.T.S.
- 1881 *No Place Like Home*, R.T.S.
- 1882 *Two Secrets and A Man of His Word*, R.T.S.
- 1882 *Under the Old Roof*, R.T.S.
- 1883 *The Lord's Purse Bearer's*, R.T.S.
- 1884 *Carola*, R.T.S.
- 1884 *The Sweet Story of Old*, R.T.S.
- 1887 *A Green Bay Tree*, publisher unknown.

- 1887 *Her Only Son*, R.T.S.
 1887 *The Ray of Sunlight: or, Jack Stafford's Resolve*, R.T.S.
 1888 *The Christmas Child*, R.T.S.
 1888 *A Miserable Christmas and a Happy New Year*, R.T.S.
 1888 *Only A Dog*, R.T.S.
 1889 *An Acrobat's Girlhood*, R.T.S.
 1891 *Half Brothers*, R.T.S.
 1894 *The Highway of Sorrow: A Story of Modern Russia*, Cassell & Co.
 1894 *Paul Rodents*, [with Serge Stepniak as ****], Cassell & Co, London & New York.
 1897 *In the Hollow of His Hand*, R.T.S.
 1898 *The Soul of Honour*, Isbister & Co, London.
 1903 *Good Words from the Apocrypha*, R.T.S.
 1903 *Parables of Our Lord*, R.T.S.
 1904 *Jessica's Mother*, R.T.S.
 1905 *Left Alone, and Other Stories*, R.T.S.
 1906 *Thoughts on Old Age: Good Words From Many Minds*, R.T.S.
 n.d. *A Sin and A Shame* *
 n.d. *Poison in the Packet* *
 n.d. *On and Off Duty*. *
 n.d. *The China Cup*. *

(* These undated stories are recorded in the Minutes of the R.T.S. Copyright Committee but no editions have been traced.)

**Archival and Manuscript Materials Relating to Charlotte Maria Tucker -
"A Lady of England" (1821-1893), and Bibliography of all known
published works by "A.L.O.E."**

Manuscripts and Archives

Diary of Jane Tucker, (1812-1844). MSS EUR *Tucker Papers*, British Library, India Office Library and Records, London.

Minutes of the Indian Female Normal School & Instruction Society, (later Church of England Zenana Mission), (1875-1878). Interserve Evangelical Mission Archives, London.

Church of England Zenana Mission Papers: "*The Women of India and Zenana and Educational Work Among Them*", 1878 and "*Papers re Founding of CEMZS 1880*", Series CEZ/G, File AP 2, Church Missionary Society Archives, University of Birmingham, Birmingham.

Religious Tract Society Archives, Copyright Sub-Committee Minute Books, Vol.127, (1857-1862), Vol. 128, (1862-1867), Vol. 129, (1868-1872). [Religious Tract Society Archives are held with the United Society for Christian Literature Archives on Microfiche USCL]. School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London.

Autographed Letters

Letter. Charlotte Maria Tucker to Thomas Nelson & Sons, Publishers, April 11, 1864. MSS. Add. 45918, British Library, London.

Letter. Charlotte Maria Tucker to Sir William Muir, Jan. 28, 1876. Ref. Dk.2.13, p. 26. Edinburgh University Library, Edinburgh.

Will

Charlotte Maria Tucker of Batala Punjab in India, Spinster. Principal Registry of the Family Division, Somerset House, London.

Obituaries

The Publishers' Circular, Dec. 30, 1893.

The Graphic, Jan. 6, 1894

The Times, Dec. 29, 1893.

Bibliographical Note

Many of Charlotte Maria Tucker's short tales were published first in periodicals including the *Family Treasury of Sunday Reading*, *The Children's Paper*, and the *Christian Juvenile Instructor* (which she edited for a time), and were then reprinted by Thomas Nelson & Son, one of A.L.O.E.'s principal publisher's, in England and America. A number of A.L.O.E.'s tales were published first by the Religious Tract Society in the *Leisure Hour* and the *Sunday At Home* and copyright of these works were later purchased outright by Gall & Inglis of Edinburgh, her other principal publisher in Great Britain. In America, the American Tract Society, the General Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union, and the Church Book Society published many of A.L.O.E.'s short tales. In New York, R. Carter & Bros., and in Chicago, the Engberg-Holmberg Publishing Company, were her foremost publishers. Engberg-Holmberg Forlag

translated many of A.L.O.E's works into Swedish. A.L.O.E's tales were also published in London by the Sunday School Union and the Christian Literature for India Society, and in Madras by the Christian Vernacular Education Society.

Articles written by Charlotte Maria Tucker - "A Lady of England" A.L.O.E

'Zenana Life In India', *The Quiver*, An Illustrated Magazine for Sunday and General Reading, Vol. XVII, 1882. [unsigned].

'Is The Work Real? by A.L.O.E.,' *The Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society* for Year Ended Dec. 31, 1875, Thos. & Archibald Constable Interdenominational Protestant Society, Edinburgh, 1876, pp. 50-52.

'Legend of Chamba by A.L.O.E., Honorary Missionary of Batala', *Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol. V, 1880, pp. 174-176.

'To Those About To Become Missionaries by A.L.O.E., Honorary Missionary of Batala', *Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol. V, 1880, pp. 250-252.

'Our Work and the Workers - "An Indian Sketch", from A.L.O.E.,' *Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol III, 1877, pp. 83-85.

'Girls' School Union - Sketches and Thoughts by A.L.O.E.', *Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol. III, 1876, pp. 91-96.

'Girls' School Union - For the Young Readers of the Female Missionary Intelligencer', A.L.O.E., *Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol. III, 1876, 139-141.

'Corner for the Girls' School Union', A.L.O.E., *Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol. III, 1876, pp. 177-179.

'Stories on the Ten Commandments - I. The Broken Bridge, II. The Burning Hut', taken from "A Wreath of Indian Stories" by A.L.O.E., *Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol. III, pp. 283-286.

'Girls' School Union - A Letter from A.L.O.E., to Christian Girls At Home', *Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol. III, 1877, pp. 332-334.

'The Marks on the Sand' taken from "A Wreath of Indian Stories" by A.L.O.E., *Indian Female Evangelist*, Vol. III, 1877, pp. 334-335.

Books written by Charlotte Maria Tucker - "A Lady of England" - A.L.O.E., listed by date of publication.

This consolidated bibliography incorporates all A.L.O.E's known works compiled from data gathered from the *Publishers' Circular* (1860-1890), *British Library Catalogue* and *National Union Catalog Pre-1956 Imprints*. Other bibliographic details have been incorporated from Agnes Giberne's biography, *A Lady of England: The Life and Letters of Charlotte Maria Tucker*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1895 and from Nancy M. Cutts, *Ministering Angels: A Study of Nineteenth Evangelical Writing for Children*, Five Owls Press, Herts. U.K. 1979. Alternative titles and publishers have been indicated where possible. [?] indicates that date or publisher is unknown.

1852 *Claremont Tales; or, Illustrations from the Beatitudes*, Gall & Inglis, Edinburgh, [henceforth, Gall & Inglis], Houlston & Wright, and Simpkin & Marshall, London.

- 1853 *Glimpses of the Unseen*, Gall & Inglis.
 1853 *True Heroism*, Gall & Inglis.
 1853 *Life of Luther*, Groom & Co., London.
 1853 *Wing's and Sting's*, T. Nelson & Sons, London, Edinburgh & New York.
 [Henceforth T. Nelson & Sons]. [4 editions]
 1853 *The Adopted Son*, Gall & Inglis.
 1853 *The Giant Killer; or, The Battle Which All Must Fight*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1853 *The Young Pilgrim*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1853 *Angus Tarlton; or, Illustrations of the Fruits of the Spirit*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1856 *New Year's Address for 1857: As Ye Sow So Shall Ye Reap*, Gall & Inglis.
 1856 *Upwards and Downwards: The Sluggard and the Diligent, A Story for Boys*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1856 *History of a Needle*, T. Nelson & Sons. (Also found as *Story of a Needle*),
- 1857 *Rambles of a Rat*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 [Published in France as *L'Histoire de la Famille Chester et de Deux Petits Orphelins*, par P.J. Stahl, (Dessins par L. Frolich), Paris, 1873. Second Edition published, St. Quentin, 1875.]
 1857 *Daybreak in Britain*, Religious Tract Society, London.
 1857 *The Roby Family; or, Battling with the World*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1857 *Abbeokuta; or, Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission*, R. Carter & Bros, New York, J. Nisbet, & Co. London. (5 editions).
- 1858 *Flora; or, Self-Deception*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1858 *The Mine; or, Darkness and Light*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1858 *Futteypore; or, the City of Victory*, S.P.C.K. London.
 1858 *Old Friends with New Faces*, T. Nelson & Sons. [Appeared in 1866 in America as *Eddie Ellerslie; Old Friends with New Faces*, R. Carter & Bros. New York.]
 1858 *Precepts in Practice; or, Stories Illustrating the Proverbs*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1858 *Harry Dangerfield, the Poacher*, Gall & Inglis.
 1858 *Ned Manton; or, Cottage by the Stream*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1859 *The Christian's Mirror; or, Words in Season*, T. Nelson & Son.
 1859 *Idols in the Heart: A Tale*, T. Nelson & Son.
 1859 *Whispering Unseen; or, "Be Ye Doers of the Word"*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1859 *The Lost Jewel*, Shaw & Co. London.
 1859 *The Convict's Child; or, the Helmet of Hope; Friend or Foe; or, the Breastplate of Righteousness; A Hasty Blow; or, the Sandals of Peace; Proved in Peril; or the Shield of Faith; the Sailor's Home, or the Girdle of Truth; Son of Israel; or, he Sword of the Spirit*, Gall & Inglis. [This collection of stories later appeared as a single story as *Ned Franks, or the Christian Panoply. A Tale in Six Parts*, in 1865, and again in 1870 as *The Christian's Panoply*. Gall & Inglis also list this tale as part of "A.L.O.E's Library", [n.d.] as *Ned Franks, The One Armed Sailor*.]
- 1860 *Gain & Loss*, Gall & Inglis.
 1860 *Pride and His Prisoners*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1860 *Parliament in the Playroom*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1860 *Invited Guests; a Religious Tract for Children*, Gall & Inglis.
 1860 *The Lost Jewel: A Tale by A.L.O.E.*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1861 *Illustrations of the Parables*, Gall & Inglis.
 1861 *Shepherd of Bethlehem, King of Israel*, T. Nelson & Sons. [5 editions].
 1861 *My Neighbour's Shoes*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1862 *Christian Conquests*, Gall & Inglis.
 1862 *Christian Love and Loyalty*, Gall & Inglis.

- 1862 *The Light in the Robber's Cave*, T. Nelson & Sons. [Later appeared as *The Robber's Cave: A Story of Italy*.]
- 1862 *War and Peace: A Tale of the Retreat from Cabaul*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1863 *The Crown of Success; or, Four Heads to Furnish*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1863 *Pretty Presents for Pets*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1863 *Silver Casket; or, Love Not the World*, T. Nelson & Sons. [Also subtitled *The World and Its Wiles*.]
- 1863 *Sketch from the History of the Jews*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1863 *Stories from Jewish History, from the Babylonish Captivity to the the Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1863 *Picture Reward Cards, Illustrating the Life of Christ. Poetry by A.L.O.E.*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1864 *Exiles in Babylon; or, the Children of Light*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1864 *Miracles of Heavenly Love in Daily Life*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1864 *Stories for the Young by A.L.O.E.*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1864 *Tit, Tiny and Tittens, the Three White Kittens: Rhymes*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1864 *Ned Franks*. (See above, 1859).
- 1864 *Esther Parsons; or Try Again*, R. Carter & Bros. New York.
- 1865 *Rescued From Egypt*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1865 *Fairy Know-A-Bit; or a Nutshell of Knowledge*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1865 *Our Sympathizing High Priest; Meditations on the Daily Sorrows of the Saviour*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1866 *The Wanderer in Africa; a Tale Illustrating the Thirty-Second Psalm*, Gall & Inglis. [Appeared in America as *David Aspinall, the Wanderer in Africa: A Tale Illustrating the thirty-second psalm*, R. Carter & Bros. New York.]
- 1866 *The Straight Road is Shortest and Surest*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1866 *Triumph over Midian*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1866 *Eddie Ellerslie; or Old Friends with New Faces*, R. Carter & Bros. New York. See 1858 above.
- 1867 *Sheer Off; or, the Two Schoolmasters of Colne*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1867 *Hymns and Poems*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1867 *House Beautiful; or, the Bible Museum*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1867 *The Holiday Chaplet of Stories*, Gall & Inglis. [Also listed as *The Sunday Chaplet of Stories*.]
- 1867 *Thoughtful Alice and Other Stories*, [no publisher].
- 1867 *Zaida's Nursery Note-Book: For the Use of Mothers*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1868 *Living Jewels; or, Diversities of Christian Character Suggested by Precious Stones with Biographical Examples*, Hunt & Co., London.
- 1868 *Castle of Carlsmont: A Tragedy in Five Acts in Verse*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1868 *On The Way; or, Places Passed by Pilgrims*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1868 *Hebrew Heroes: A Tale Founded on Jewish History*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1869 *A Braid of Cords*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1869 *Claudia: A Tale*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1869 *The Golden Fleece*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1869 *The Children's Treasury of New Stories*, R. Carter & Bros. New York.
- 1870 *Cyril Ashley*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1870 *A.L.O.E's Picture Story Book*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1870 *Bought with a Price*, the American Tract Co., New York.
- 1870 *Daybreak In Britain*, Religious Tract Society, London. [First published by the Religious Tract Society in *Sunday At Home*.]
- 1870 *A Gift Book for the New Year*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1870 *Be On Your Guard; or, A New Year's Address to Sunday Scholars*, Sunday

- School Union, London.
- 1870 *The Cord of Love; A Tale*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1870 *New Year's Hymns (six Hymns)*, [publisher?]
- 1870 *Is There A Heart In It? A New Year's Address for 1871*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1871 *The Lady of Provence; or, Humbled and Healed. A Tale of the first French Revolution*, T. Nelson & Sons
- 1871 *The Children's Tabernacle; or Handwork and Heartwork*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1871 *Wreath of Smoke, and Other Stories*, Gall & Inglis. [First published by the Religious Tract Society in the *Leisure Hour*.]
- 1871 *Freedom: A Tale of the Early Christians*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1871 *The Hymn My Mother Taught Me and Other Stories*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1872 *The City of Nocross and its Famous Physician*, T. Nelson & Sons. [This appeared first in *The Family Treasury* as "The Great Imposter or Popular, Pleasant, Pernicious"].
- 1872 *The Silver Keys: A Tale*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1872 *The Black Cliff*, R. Carter & Bros, New York.
- 1872 *Edith and her Ayah and other Stories*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1872 *The Olive Branch & Other Stories*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1872 *Try Again and Other Stories*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1873 *A Friend in Need and Other Stories*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1873 *Good for Evil and Other Stories*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1873 *The Life of Luther*. By A.L.O.E., (Chiefly Taken from D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation*), T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1874 *An Eden in England; or, The Trials of Jessi Mildmay*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1874 *The Spanish Cavalier: A Story of Seville*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1874 *Fairy Frisket; or Peeps at Insect Life*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1874 *The Father's Letter: A New Year Story*, Sunday School Union, London.
- 1874 *The Little Maid, (With Illustrations)*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1874 *Norah's Trial*, [publisher?]
- 1875 *The Backward Swing and Other Stories*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1875 *Haunted Rooms: A Tale by A.L.O.E.*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1875 *The Brother's Return and Other Stories*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1875 *The Children's Garland: a Picture Story Book*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1875 *The Children's Posy: a Picture Story Book*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1875 *Every Cloud Has A Silver Lining and Five Other Little Books*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1875 *Little Bullets from Batala*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1875 *The Message of Hope and Other Stories*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1875 *Only A Little and Other Stories*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1876 *Nelson's Packet Stories by A.L.O.E.*, T. Nelson & Sons. (Packets 1, 2, 15, 18, 39 & 40).
- 1876 *A Wreath of Indian Stories by A.L.O.E.*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1876 *The Tiny Red Night-Cap and Other Stories*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1877 *Blind Alice and her Benefactress*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1878 *Christ and the Soul: Texts Selected and Spiritual Songs written by A.L.O.E.*, T. Nelson & Sons.
- 1878 *Pomegranates from the Punjab: Indian Stories*, Gall & Inglis.
- 1879 [No titles have been traced for the year 1879 in the *British Library Catalogue*, *National Union Catalogue* nor in Giberne's or Cutt's bibliographies. A.L.O.E.'s professional writing may have been disrupted difficulties caused by the Afghan Wars (1878-80). However, A.L.O.E. wrote a series of small booklets which were translated into Indian Languages, published by the Christian

Vernacular Education Society in Madras at this time. A list is reproduced below in **Booklets**, but precise publications dates are unknown.]

- 1880 *The Zenana Reader*, Christian Vernacular Education Society, Madras.
 1880 *Life in the Eagle's Nest: A Tale of Afghanistan*, Gall & Inglis. [Also appeared as *The Eagle's Nest; or, Captured by Afghans*.]
 1881 *Hours with Orientals*, Gall & Inglis.
 1882 *Seven Perils Passed*, Gall & Inglis.
 1883 *Mahala, the Jewish Slave. A Story of Early Christianity*, Religious Tract Society. [First appeared in the *Sunday At Home*.]
 1884 *Life in the White Bear's Den*, Gall & Inglis. [Later appeared as *The White Bear's Den: A Tale of Labrador*.]
 1884 *Pearls of Wisdom from the Parables of Christ*, Morgan & Scott, London. [24 tales similar to the *Nelson Packet Stories*, issued in 1876].
 1885 *Harold Hartley; or, Pictures Drawn in an English Home*, Gall & Inglis.
 1885 *Pictures of St. Paul Drawn in an English Home*, Gall & Inglis.
 1886 *Pictures of St. Peter in an English Home*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1887 *Driven into Exile: A Story of the Huguenots*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1887 *The Fairy in a Spider's Web*, Gall & Inglis.
 1887 *Percival's Picture Gallery*, Morgan & Scott, London.
 1888 *The Hartley Brothers; or, The Knights of St. John, a Tale*, Gall & Inglis.
 1888 *Harold's Bride: a Tale*, T. Nelson & sons.
 1889 *Beyond the Black Waters*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1890 *The Blacksmith of Boniface Lane*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1891 *The Iron Chain and the Golden*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1891 *The Two Crutches and Other Stories*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1891 *The Two Dinners and Other Stories*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1891 *The Rope Cable Cut and Other Stories*, T. Nelson & Sons.
 1891 *Black Yarn and Blue*, T. Nelson & Sons. [Part of the *Giving Light* Series].
 1892 *The Folorn Hope*, T. Nelson & Sons.

A.L.O.E's Booklets published c. 1875 onwards, by the Christian Vernacular Literature Society, (C.V.E.S) in Madras. [Henry Carre Tucker, C.B., Charlotte Maria Tucker's eldest brother, was a foundation member of the C.V.E.S].

Widows and the Bible
The African Child
The Fountain and the Cloud
Let in the Daylight
New Ways of Eating Kelas
(Plantains)
The Oldest Language of All
The Rajah and his Servants
The Rainbow
The Brahmini Bull
The Brahmin's Story
The Rebel

Trees to be Cut down
The Turban with a Border of Gold
The Twice-Born
Walayat Ali, the Martyr
The Search after a Pearl
Story of a Farmer
Eight Pearls of Blessing
Flowers and Fruits
Gideon the Hero
India's People
The Mirror and the Bracelet
The Prophet and the Leper

Vessels of Gold
The Bag of Treasure
The Ploughshare
The Intercessor
Gift to the Caliph
For Whom Is This?
The Child Marriage
Story of the Pink Chaddar

Spiritual and Physical Analogies
Wreath of Stories
The Two Pilgrims of Kashi; and Other Stories
Jai Singh, the Brave Sikh; and Other Stories
The Wonderful Medicine; and Other Stories
The Story of Dr. Duff
The Flower of India
The Precious Trust

[This list appears represents 'some' of A.L.O.E's booklets. Giberne, *op. cit.*, p. 519.]

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All the Year Round
Athenaeum
Band of Hope Review
Blackwood's Magazine
British Quarterly Review
Chambers Magazine
Children's Treasury
Churchman's Companion
Church Missionary Society Intelligencer and Record
Contemporary Review
Dublin Review
Dublin University Magazine
Edinburgh Review
Eliza Cook's Journal
Good Words
Household Words
Fortnightly Review
Fraser's Magazine
Imperial Review
Indian Female Evangelist
Illustrated London News
Leisure Hour
National Review
North British Review
Pall Mall Gazette
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